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THE NARRATIVE

OF AN

EXPELLED CORRESPONDENT.

BY

FREDERICK BOYLE,

AUTHOR OF 'THROUGH FANTEELAND TO COOMASSIE,' 'TO THE CAPE FOR DIAMONDS,' 'A RIDE ACROSS A CONTINENT,' 'ADVENTURES IN BORNEO,' ETC. ETC.

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THE STORY OF MY EXPULSION.

THIS is no record of the war in progress, nor even a diary. It professes to be nothing more than a series of sketches drawn during the campaign, linked only by such telegraphic threads as are needed to make the story comprehensible. Had not the Grand Duke Nicholas-Nicholaevitch taken offence at some of my letters, they would never have been reprinted, for I had not the least idea of publishing a volume whilst I followed the Russian march.

But the Grand Duke has thought it worth while to place on record his account of my ejection from head-quarters, with a detailed report of my words, and a brief abstract of my feelings and behaviour. Such attentions invite return. Whilst I remained in camp, it would have been neither safe nor gentlemanly to sketch his Highness in his habit as he lives; nor,

without provocation, should I have dreamed of doing so in all my existence to come, seeing that the subject does not interest nor amuse me at all. These dignitaries are sad stuff for "copy," unless one contemn the advice of Scripture and tell truth of them. Colour and life and fun may sit in the rags of a beggar, but "prancing princes" look best in outline. I am honestly vexed that reprisals should be forced upon me.

The charge against me is, that I revealed "movements and positions of troops," and in so doing broke my word of honour, and betrayed the "hospitality" extended to me by his Highness. Of the latter accusation first.

I recollect that one Grand Duke did me the honour to drink from my flask on a certain afternoon which was warm in all senses. I recollect serving a rude breakfast or lunch or dinner not once nor twice to officers of the headquarter staff, and most heartily welcome were those pleasant *seigneurs*. But I do not recollect, though I have tried with all my conscience, that any Grand Duke showed me hospitality more substantial than is contained in a glass of tea—and that once only. As for the officers of the staff with whom I had the pleasure to be acquainted, I am

very sure that their hospitality would have been measured only by their means, had I needed it, or been in the way of receiving it. Yet—as a matter of bare fact again—I never had the opportunity or the invitation to enjoy the fruit of their amiability, saving once, at Drenova. The imperial staff dwells some distance to the rear, whilst duty called me to the front. Be it established then, that the charge of ingratitude is no more than a poetical expression on the part of his Highness.

Regarded as a poetical expression, it may bear many meanings. An Imperial Grand Duke may hold it the supreme point of hospitality to talk with a correspondent. I will not dispute this definition; but whilst admitting it I must retain my idea that the subject chosen should be one pleasant to the individual thus hospitably entertained.

With this limitation the imagery of his Highness fails once more, since I remember no conversation of those which he was so gracious as to hold with me which did not turn upon the baseness of England and her abominable conduct. Upon such topics I kept persistent silence, and here again the "hospitality" was all on one side. I have known from childhood that silence gives consent, and by

an amazing experience I have learned that the same notion, if not the same proverb, is accepted in Russia. At the Emperor's table, a famous diplomatist announced that he had held two hours' conversation with the correspondent of the *Standard*, and had converted him to an admission that Lord Beaconsfield's policy was "monstrous." Those who regard an Englishman's word as equal in weight to that of a Grand Duke, may credit that I had answered not a syllable to the indictment. Such reticence is imposed upon those who would enjoy the hospitality of Russian headquarters.

The frankness displayed in speaking of myself leads me to suppose that a sketch in answer may not give offence. I assuredly set nothing down in malice, but draw an honest portrait to the best of my knowledge.

It is immensely difficult for a Grand Duke to avoid vulgarity, and none of the Russian princes escape that danger, except the Emperor's youngest sons, who have not yet forgotten the manners taught by an English gentleman. Nicholas-Nicholaevitch is probably the best of the elder generation; so I am assured by all who have an acquaintance with his brothers. That his son, the younger Nicholas, is

more hopeful than his cousins, with the exception named, I can believe from my own observations.

No good qualities have been attributed to the Commander-in-Chief in my hearing. The feature of his disposition most notable is described in camp as bluntness, soldierlike frankness, &c.; "we call it a much rougher name out-of-doors." His manner towards every one is more or less insulting, not consciously so, I believe. When he sees or imagines ground of offence, he straightway becomes foul-mouthed and brutal. I conceive that if his Highness had been born one of the people, he would have grown a weak, foolish man, docile, good-tempered, and submissive, as are most Russians. Habits of command have spoiled his temper, but they could not give him dignity. It is impossible to discuss even trifles with him, for difference of opinion is put down at once with the rough tongue. His ideas are rashly formed and held with obstinacy: to combat them means disrespect, and unlocks a torrent of abuse.

The Grand Duke speaks English, French, German, and what not, but he knows only Russian—that is, his acquaintance with human nature, his view of things, the essence of his mind, are that of the average

bourgeois in his native land. Reading and seeing have taught him nothing. He suspects everybody of mean and dishonourable schemes, nor understands that a gentleman will not lie or cheat or violate confidence. He can accuse the scion of an English house, famed not for antiquity alone, but for the grandest achievements in our island story, of playing the spy, and can see nothing unreasonable or offensive in so doing. So does the *moujik*, and so does the Grand Duke.

When his Highness took command, his *maître d'hôtel* asked how many covers he should provide. "Twelve" was the answer. The *maître d'hôtel* took on himself to furnish twenty-four, and fifty officers scramble for them nightly. Headquarters fare is a proverb in the army. If the Emperor's table be extravagant and ill-served, at least there is enough to eat, and the provisions are not bad. The Grand Duke's own *menu* is careful enough, but it must be admitted that he cares little for eating, provided the wine be plentiful and good. He seems not to notice that his guests have nothing to drink besides the sour puddle which Bulgars ingeniously extract from their delicious grapes. As for the food, even ill-cooked and tainted, there is such scarcity that an

officer arriving five minutes late goes empty away. Economy is laudable, but it belongs to a concatenation of virtues which Muscovite Grand Dukes do not affect, and which, like generosity in a beggar, seem out of place.

The generalship of his Highness is judged. Of his soldierly qualities I have not much to tell, not having witnessed that supreme display of them whereof the world was informed on the 10th of September. Upon that eventful day, amongst many shells of which the explosion is recorded only in the hearts of many a Russian mother, one fell more or less near to the headquarter staff. The Grand Duke's behaviour in this trying situation was heroic. No one was hurt, and immediately after demonstrating his heroism he cantered off to mention it by telegraph. Shells happened to fall near myself and others. I do not know whether we behaved heroically, but we cantered from the spot. And that is all I have to report upon this matter.

In other lists the Grand Duke is unquestionably formidable. His tastes are unaffected, as becomes the warrior, and he prefers to leave negotiation to a deputy. Roumanian manners are quite to his

mind, and Bucharest is a city which he could not visit too often.

So much return I make for the publicity which has been granted me. And now to the facts.

On the 24th of August I wrote a letter from Paradim, which will be found further on, in its proper date. It appeared in the *Standard* of the 4th of September, and probably returned to headquarters about the 10th of September—that memorable day when the Grand Duke was not wounded by a shell.

I reached Gorny-Studen on Tuesday, September 25, coming from Gor Monastyr, by way of Sistof. The valleys were bogs, the hills slides of clay, the skies melted on one's head. At Turk Sliva, gained with the utmost difficulty, I abandoned my waggon for this year, and sent it back to winter quarters, dragged by oxen. An amusing *kraal* is Turk Sliva, but I have no time at this moment to dwell upon the humours of a night there. At Gorny-Studen, travelling always between rain and mud, not an empty house could be found, and the waggon dismissed had hitherto served me for a tent. Under the circumstances I ventured to appropriate the quarters of Colonel Wellesley, where I had been welcomed so kindly and

so often. Both his servants were laid up with fever, and the poor fellows had not found energy enough to peg his tent afresh since the rains began. The bellying canvas fluttered and heaved all night, but it kept out some of the rain, and five months' campaigning leaves one mighty indifferent to sound and fury which signifies nothing.

The day of my arrival I slid down the Emperor's hill, waded knee-deep across the gulley, and slipped, recovered, slipped, fell on my hands, spun round, and tackled it afresh, again and again, till I climbed the opposite rise. The distance from his Majesty's headquarters to those of the Grand Duke may be four hundred yards, but there was a battle at each step. Then I saw by experience how desperate must be a winter campaign in Bulgaria. More tired than if I had walked a dozen miles, I reached the sacred inclosure, and called upon Colonel von Hassenkampf. He received me, as usual, with that silky manner which characterises the Russian in office—the manner, I suspect, which tempted Bonaparte to his famous epigram. On the part of Colonel von Hassenkampf it is a mere tradition, doubtless, for he showed extreme courtesy, even when "the Tartar" had the best occasion possible for breaking

out, had he laid underneath. We talked of the campaign, its prospects and disappointments; we enjoyed a little laugh or two, the Colonel gave me some hints which proved to be quite correct, and we parted excellent friends, upon the understanding that I would go towards Tirnova next day. "That is your best direction," were his last words, and so it would have been.

I slithered and waded, and slipped and struggled, back to Colonel Wellesley's tent and slept there. Next day, the rain pouring softly and silently always, I preferred to risk a limb rather than undertake that miserable voyage afoot, and at 7 a.m. set out on horseback for the *Marketender's* upon the Grand Duke's hill. Here, whilst I drank my early cup of tea, a pleasant young officer approached, and asked if I was the correspondent of the *Standard*. He begged me to accompany him, at my convenience, to the quarters of the *commandant de place*. Presently, the tea finished, we set out together, I leading my horse. Under the eternal drip, he took me to the particular morass where General Stein had his dwelling—a square tent banked up with a carriage on each side. Here Colonel Polivanoff received me with the most cordial wel-

come. This fine old soldier is the *sous-commandant*, and a busy time he has of it. Before we could get away, several magnificent officers of the Guard demanded his attention. All spotless they were in new uniform, even their boots unsullied, though dim with the rain. Presently we escaped, and reached the Kurdish tent which Colonel von Hassenkampf shares with General Levitsky. After shaking hands in his usual manner, the Colonel produced a column of some newspaper, from which the margin and date had been cut, and said in French, "Is this your article?"

Here, according to the curious report which his Highness has thought proper to circulate, I became "*légèrement troublé.*" A police official of Russia—Colonel von Hassenkampf is thus distinguished at home—has every reason to expect that persons haled before him will be "slightly confused," to say the least of it. Without boasting a quality which is as much matter of constitution as is the ability to eat dressed crab, I may remark that my composure is not so easily disturbed.

I recognised the paper of the *Standard*, and said at random, looking for the date, "It ought to be mine, but you have cut the margin off;" then I added, after a glance down the column, "Yes, this is

my writing." These petty details are necessary, since the Russian gazette, omitting my remark about the margin, leaves the inference that I equivocated.

Colonel von Hassenkampf then, retaking the paper, observed, "Do you not think that this passage violates the engagement you made, upon your word of honour, when you received permission to follow the army?"*

The gazette alleges my answer to have been—I take the translation furnished by some telegraphic agency—"Yes, yes! But allow me to call your attention to the fact that this article was written on the 24th of August, and since then some time has elapsed."

I submit that if his Highness have the military right to expel a man, and to justify the action by accusing him of dishonourable conduct, he has no right to make him appear a fool. Accused of breaking my word of honour, I am represented as answering, without more discussion, "Yes, yes, of course, certainly, by all means, but it was a good

* I cannot profess to recollect the exact words of our short conversation. The official reporter, who, I take it, was Colonel von Hassenkampf himself, has a memory far more copious than mine; but it wants accuracy.

while ago!" The suggestion is droll, but not really skilful, because nobody, I should think, would credit that the *Standard* would have put such a helpless creature upon a mission which I had been fulfilling nearly five months.

What I said was, in effect—"This is a letter, not a telegram. Even if posted as soon as written it could not appear in type before the 2nd of September, at earliest" (as a matter of fact it appeared on the 4th). "The movement of troops referred to were only a shifting of position, and the situation must necessarily have changed again long before my letter could be published. I should certainly have broken my word had I *telegraphed* such news, but you see that I have not done so." Colonel von Hassenkampf looked at the article, and said a word or two to one of the officers standing by. I added—and this is all that dwells in my memory upon which that most silly of replies could have been founded—"If this article was published on the 2nd, his Highness must have had it a long time."

"That, you will agree, is our business," said the colonel, and I answered, "Of course!"

"Do you not consider," he resumed, "that this passage shows extreme ill-will towards our army?"

The sentence pointed out was scored deeply with blue pencil-marks. It ran, "I could laugh heartily if the fever would leave me and I could get enough to eat." Having no time to read the context, and remembering, in truth, very little of the letter, which was written during an attack of fever—I could only say that I would show a hundred passages displaying the warmest personal esteem for Russian officers, as the reader of this volume can testify.

The fact is, that this unlucky sentence was not meant to refer to the army, but to our corps of correspondents, who, at the outset of the war, galloped hither and thither, demanding Turks to eat. But it might certainly be understood the other way.

Colonel von Hassenkampf put away the paper and said, "His Highness has consulted the Emperor, and his Majesty is decided that such *malveillance* towards the army cannot be tolerated. I am charged, therefore, to instruct you to leave Bulgaria and Roumania in the shortest possible time."

I asked, "Roumania also?" The Colonel answered, *légèrement troublé*—

"*Enfin, M. le Colonel Loupojano, qui est chargé de vous accompagner, portera une note de la part de son Altesse priant les autorités Roumaines de faire*

ses volontés." I am certain of the exact words. No comment is needed, I think. Thereupon I delivered up my armlet and my stamped photograph.

The Colonel then shook hands with apparent warmth—in his usual manner, that is—so did other officers in the tent whom I do not know by name.

The *sous-commandant*, Colonel Polivanoff, did not change his amiable manner towards me in the least as he took me away. He showed great surprise and regret, having been kept ignorant of the accusation, but was kindly and at ease with me as before. With other officers he accepted an invitation to breakfast at the *Marketender's*, and many good wishes were offered me over the champagne *de rigueur*.

So the Grand Duke's staff treated a man accused of serious offences. If his Highness believe me guilty, no one else does; more than that, all seemed to take pains to show their disbelief—as will be told hereafter. The absurdity is patent. Between three weeks and a fortnight this article had been lying before his Highness. All that time my movements were quite open and known. I might have been summoned to account at any moment. I had already been twenty-four hours at Gorny-Studen itself, during which time I had twice visited head-

quarters and seen Colonel von Hassenkampf, who behaved with his usual amiability. Between night and morning, apparently, a sudden resolve was made, an old article brought out, the Emperor consulted, and his sanction obtained for my dismissal. Next day a gentleman suspected of writing for the *Daily Telegraph* was ordered across the Danube, without any flattering fuss, and three days afterwards an order forbade all correspondents whatsoever to visit any lines or positions of troops.

I have told the events just as they happened, without attempting to conceal that the sentence "I could laugh," &c., was so clumsily put that it would bear the interpretation set on it. But if the Grand Duke has done me the honour to follow my correspondence, he must be quite well aware that it stood alone in displaying ill-will towards his army. My opinion about the war is strong, but I could easily draw a distinction between political sentiment and personal feeling. Moreover, we had been told again and again, by Colonel von Hassenkampf himself, that "appreciations," opinions, were free, and would give no offence.

In truth the rules laid down by the Russian Chancellerie were no less than a trap to catch corre-

spondents at any moment. Not one of us but necessarily violated them. How can a man chronicle war and avoid "reference to movements of troops" and "positions"? Of all papers in Europe that possess any influence, the *Standard* was the only one not Russophile that obtained leave to send a representative to headquarters. At any moment he lay at the mercy of the Grand Duke. Not a correspondent but might be expelled from hour to hour under the operation of these impossible rules, and be accused, with as much justice as myself, or more, of breaking his "word of honour." There came a moment when it seemed undesirable that even partial witnesses should be amitted, and in logic his Highness could no less than send an enemy to the frontier when he confined his friends to camp.

I should be sorry to think that this is not the whole explanation of my dismissal, for if honour was engaged on one side, so it was on the other; and if I gave no information useful to the Turks, Colonel von Hassenkampf had pledged his master to take no offence at "opinions."

A certain series of coincidences has been pointed out to me by foreign friends. I do not dwell upon it, but the ways of autocratic government are not to

be criticised by common-sense. The facts put before me are curious—be they taken for what they are thought worth.

As will be seen by letters in this volume, the abrupt order to leave had been to some extent prefaced by omens and warnings. Before the letter upon which the charge was based had been so much as written, Colonel von Hassenkampf had summoned two of my *confrères* who chanced to be sojourning at headquarters. He asked them whether a correspondent of the *Standard* could reasonably be thought capable of giving information to the enemy. They ridiculed the idea with warmth, and so it passed away. I myself was at headquarters before, during, and after this conversation; before and after it I was met with the blandest courtesy. Two days after I had gone to the front, a despatch-box was stolen, under circumstances perfectly well known through Europe. The foreign officer whose correspondence thus vanished had given me shelter in his tent whilst I stayed at headquarters. There was nothing poetical about *his* hospitality, but if it cost him the world of pains and annoyance which he underwent I most deeply regret that I did not know my privileges, nor applied to his Highness for a lodging.

It is further pointed out to me that the courier thus robbed might naturally have been supposed to bear despatches from another foreign officer with whom I had made acquaintance at the opening of the campaign—acquaintance that ripened into friendship in our long marches, and was welded to intimacy on the battlefield.

My own writing-case vanished at Giurgevo. It contained, amongst things more serious to lose, a letter in which I had recounted point by point the conversation of a diplomat upon Bulgarian things in general—the conversation to which I have alluded. So curious were the ideas he unfolded to me that I noted down the heads of his monologue immediately on quitting the gentleman's hut. Perhaps, in my surprise and amusement, I talked too much of this conversation. What remains established is that my letter was lost, that the diplomat returned to Russia suddenly, and that I was presently expelled.

I did not discover these coincidences, and I draw no conclusion from them. The mystery of Russian politics is one that I do not care to touch. The only purpose of this volume is to show that I did not break my word of honour. As for the hospitality of the Grand Duke, I cannot for my life remember

where it lay, beyond permission to travel in a country which is not his.

But if there be anything here or elsewhere written to offend a body of officers who constantly showed me the greatest courtesy, I beg them to believe that it was not intended.

FREDERICK BOYLE.

North Lodge, Addiscombe, Oct. 19.

THE NARRATIVE

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EXPELLED CORRESPONDENT.

CHAPTER I.

THE COSSACKS AT BUCHAREST.

May 12.

ALL Bucharest was stirred to-day by a rumour that those legendary horsemen, the Cossacks of the Don, would be visible in their habit as they live at the Chaussée, not later than 10 a.m. All Bucharest hurried to the nearest cab-stand at the news, and vehemently requisitioned a Scopski and his vehicle.

Everybody has heard of the Scopski sect in Russia, whose most important tenet is the literal translation of a text in St. Paul's Epistles. They suffer the bitterest persecution in their native land, and for years past a steady emigration has been tending towards this country. At home they are bankers, usurers, and merchants; here they especially direct

themselves to cab-driving. Without vices, as apparently without virtues, they give their whole mind to the business, and they live together in streets of their own. As a natural consequence of a good system, they have the best cabs and the best horses of the town, which they drive with extraordinary skill. The Scopski, in his neat fur cap, his long coat of cloth or velvet trimly brushed, and his sash of brilliant colour, is not only the most picturesque but the cleverest of coachmen. His horses, always good, understand the shrill voice which seems to us unnatural, and step more gaily at a word than at the lash of a Roumanian whip. Very intelligent also is the Scopski, quiet, attentive, and wonderfully quick to understand a foreigner. So far as I can learn, he is not regarded with contempt by the population here, and the Russians, even officers, speak to him with perfect good-nature.

The Chaussée was crowded with pretty women, chattering gaily from carriage to carriage across the avenue, whilst gentlemen filled the side-paths, making innumerable cigarettes, and gossiping in the shade. A charming sight it was as I drove up, the brilliant summer toilettes flowing down to the very carriage-wheels, white necks outstretched in pretty

impatience to behold the coming sight, chequers of hot sunshine falling upon eager faces through the pale limes above, and the shrubberies on either side all pink with blossom. Our brief spring is ended almost before it had begun. A fortnight since ladies still shivered in fur, whilst to-day they are wearing low dresses of muslin, and languidly bemoaning the heat.

No spectacle less interesting than a real sotnia of Cossacks could have tempted the indolent beauties of Roumania out of doors betwixt sunrise and sunset in such weather. We have a heat more than tropical to expect henceforward, which will last probably till the middle of October—a parched, breathless downpouring of sunshine, under which green dries into yellow and disappears, dust lies six inches thick for yards along the road-side, and the muddiest water has its value. This dreary forecast of summer divides conversation with the Cossacks. At least a dozen times one hears the sigh of resignation, "*Voilà donc les chaleurs qui recommencent!*" followed by a vivacious change of subject, "*Il paraît que les Cosaques sont très-gentils garçons, hein?*"

In process of time, at the end of the long avenue

lined with carriages, sharp eyes behold a denser column of dust arising. It thickens and draws nearer smartly. A cry of delight and impatience passes all along—ladies eagerly stand up, favoured gentlemen climb upon the coachbox and the wheels. The column of dust approaches, and presently the Cossack lances pierce it, glittering in the sun, dark and colourless masses loom through it, and we become aware of a strange but stirring music.

The famous horsemen are almost among us before we see them, so neutral are their colours, and so thick the dust already. Not a sound is heard even while they pass, except that martial war-song of the bards who head each sotnia, and the shrill accompaniment of whistles modulated to weird harmony. No rattle of accoutrements betrays the Cossack; his very horse seems trained to move with silent activity. With that pæan in one's ears, and the whistles screaming through it, one beholds without astonishment these warriors glide past, stealthy and swift. One recognises the surviving race of an earlier time. To the same war-song, perhaps, marched the ancestors of these people when they overran Russia.

The Bucharest ladies were not a little impressed

and not a little frightened. They looked at each other blankly, with little shrugs of the shoulder to express amaze and distaste. One of them afterwards confessed to me that her Muscovite sympathies vanished at sight of the first Cossack, so ugly and so dirty was he. I could not agree with her. Soldiers, and officers too, are dirty on campaign, and Antinous himself could not be prepossessing if black with dust and bedabbled with perspiration. But the Cossacks are by no means so ugly as is traditionally believed. The greater number have fair hair, and the moustache of nearly all is bleached white by the sun. Many have good features, of an English rather than German type; and though I observed the Tartar cheekbone to be more common than in other regiments I have seen, it was very far from being a rule.

As soldiers, the men appear most promising, tall, well set up, full of life and spirit. They looked about them as they went with free but not insolent curiosity. Discipline was evidently lax, so far as order and regularity are concerned, but I should think the men were perfectly under command. The uniform is very ugly. Upon the matted hair, worn long, cut squarely off and trained with hideous

ingenuity to stand nearly straight from the back of the head, is set sideways a kind of unornamented shako, covered with torn oilskin, and provided with a peak. Nothing so ugly as this has been devised by the military tailor in our epoch. The tunic and breeches were blue once, I suppose, but now their colour is rust. Very clumsy boots the Cossacks wear. They have each a long lance, with triangular blade, a heavy tulwar, and a carbine; a certain number also have revolvers. They carry *tentes d'abri*, fodder, rations, water-bucket, and their very simple kit. Some were loaded up like market-women, and all had a half-dozen sacks at least hanging round their saddle. Their ponies I would not hastily criticise; they do not outwardly show those qualities with which everybody credits them, and until able to speak by experience I shall not offer an opinion. They are ridden without a curb. Like all Orientals, the Cossack sits upon his horse's shoulders with knees very high. The attitude looks clumsy and uncomfortable to us, but we know that it commends itself to some of the best horsemen in the world.

After the Don Cossacks had passed, each sotnia led by its scalds and whistlers, before the sacred

banner, the Hussars arrived. I must not forget, however, to observe a fact much commented upon here. The Cossacks march under flags of their own, dedicated to certain saints; but in moments when the faith is said to be menaced they solemnly bring out a holy banner, and declare war for religion—a *jehad*, in fact. This has been done now, and all the sotnias march under the Greek cross, worked upon a ground of different colours. Nothing remains, therefore, but to bring forth the standard of the Prophet, and let each savage fight for his own fetish.

Riding before her own regiment of Hussars came the Countess Kotzebue, in full uniform down to the waist, but riding in feminine fashion, wearing a skirt. "Her" lieutenant-colonel respectfully attended on her right hand, and a maid in boots and breeches trotted behind.—N.B. I did not myself recognise the maid, but at least a score of credible witnesses agree in swearing to her presence. What I saw I took to be a handsome boy.—The Countess is idolised by "her officers," as well she may be. I have beheld few more pleasant scenes than the modest banquet at which she entertained them in Brofft's restaurant that night. *Grande dame* in every look and movement, gentle and winning as an unconscious beauty,

she appears to stir a chivalric devotion in the youths about her. Remarking the perfect ease and ladylike frankness of her manner "in the chair," the pleasant freedom of intercourse, and the hearty, honest mirth at that table, one could not but think that a lady colonel would be an acquisition in some other regiments, English and foreign. Brofft, though a hard man, was enchanted, and when the Countess declared to him next day that "her officers" could not afford his prices, he came to terms as sweetly as the youngest subaltern among them. We correspondents in his house had no such pleader, alas!

The Countess's Hussars are a fine regiment, with brown tunics, yellow braided, and scarlet breeches. The first line carries a lance, as in all cavalry regiments of Russia. The horses are large, very badly shaped, and not, I should think, fitted for real work.

Then followed the Cossack artillery, which showed certain defects often pointed out by foreign critics, but seemed active and well-horsed. A very long train of impedimenta succeeded, and a little host of Cossack stragglers. These, from time to time, shook their bridles, and raced up to the main body. Wonderful indeed were some of the vehicles we saw, such objects as primeval man may have used; but

none the less serviceable. A box three feet square, set upon wheels, is not ill-adapted for carrying an officer's baggage in war time, but it looks monstrous funny when upon the heap of goods a gigantic soldier perches, to drive a little old horse in rusty harness.

Bucharest did not go home until the last invalid Cossack had rolled by in the ambulances. Then, whilst they toiled round the town, choking with dust, on their way to Giurgevo, we drove to breakfast rather thoughtful.

The time is probably not far distant when the glory of Bucharest, scarce recorded—the scandal hardly known wherein it delights—the thriftless, kindly, deplorable manners which amaze and rejoice and shock the stranger—each in turn will feebly vanish away. The moving world which threatens to confine "Our Special Correspondent" in cruel fetters of telegraphy is bound to sweep out these antique corners. Before it be too late, therefore, I will dedicate a column to the ethics of Bucharest.

I am not going to tell the history of this strange population. Every child knows its claim to be the purest Latin race surviving. How far the boast be true, ethnologists, physiognomists, and historians

may dispute, but any educated man who passes along the street will recognise a certain justification. At every turn, in luxurious carriage, in rags and tatters, in the broadcloth of decent tradesman or the coarse uniform of the soldier, one sees a face that might have been encountered in old Rome. Such low, broad foreheads, full of intelligence; such superb dark eyes, rounded and shadowed; such sweeping lines of perfect feature, and sensual, pouting lips, are to be beheld nowhere else. I am not ashamed to confess a perfect ignorance of the locality whence Trajan drew his colonists. It may have been from Rome itself, or from all parts of Italy; but this is certain, that the antique Roman type, such as we are accustomed to conceive it, is nowhere preserved as it is here.

One need scarcely say, therefore, that the Roumanian people have a classic beauty quite surprising. Very wide travel in many lands of either hemisphere gives me confidence to say that for regularity of feature and charm of expression they are not unsurpassed only but unrivalled. And the intelligence, the courtesy, and the kindliness of the population are not less striking.

I have put first the favourable points of Rou-

manian people, because, on the one hand, I and all who have dealings with them socially, not commercially, would feel so much to be a duty, and because, upon the other hand, I am pleased thus to verify the traditional opinion of our ancestors. I think it was Sir Charles Bell who first denounced the conventional idea of Roman beauty. Taking the busts of the Vatican and other collections for example, he argued that the ancient Romans were a ponderous people, with short features rolled in flesh, like bulldogs. Finding such faces common amongst the Trasteverini, he concluded that they kept the antique type, and very many have followed his teaching. Roumania is far off, and scarcely visited as yet by artists. It was certainly colonised by Romans, and though barbarians overran it, they never had an opportunity to mix the blood as again and again in Italy. We see there exactly the class of face traditionally attributed to the Roman people, which resembles that argumentatively designed by Sir Charles Bell even less than does the English. No barbarians who invaded this country could have left such an impress, and I am pleased alike to justify the "wisdom of our ancestors" and the purity of the Roumanian race.

But if one leave aside the perfection of classic form and a few plastered ruins, a few broken columns, there is nothing to remind us of old Rome in Bucharest. Trajan may have been more particular about the *physique* than the *moral* of his colonists, or the fine spirit of the population may have felt reverses more bitterly than would a meaner clay. I am willing to accept any excuse, because so very much is needed. In appearance these people present a "survival" of the purest classic race, but the virtues of Cato have disappeared or were never existent. One feels a kind of pitiful interest in observing the soft and effeminate manners of the Lower Empire preserved to this nineteenth century.

No class of the population is rich; from the magnificent boyard to the peasant on his vast estates everybody is drowned in debt. But the capital attempts to vie with Paris itself in luxury, and in some respects it succeeds. The narrow streets, ill-built, ill-paved, have shops where every thought of wanton idleness can be satisfied. Private houses—some immensely large, and all pretty of design—are beheld at every turn, in every direction. Yet there are abundant squares of waste, fenced by broken palings, where pariah dogs sleep and roam. The

charming little palaces, when not quite new, display most cruel secrets of construction where the tasteful stucco ornaments have tumbled down. One is continually reminded that Asia begins at the Austrian frontier.

The Roumanian is quite happy when his love affairs go smooth, and the usurer has advanced him twenty-five per cent. upon his whole revenue for next year. What should he care for a few yards of broken stucco? Rather build a new palace at once. What matters the torn shirt beneath so he get credit for a thousand-guinea pelisse? What matters any necessary in the world if costly superfluities be obtainable at any price, and Chloe do not frown? These people are children, gentle, kindly, and sweet-tempered as could be, but ignorant of real life, and unconscious of moral duties, as the best children must be. Their tradesmen are French or Germans, their men of business Jews, their engineers certain luckless English, and their artisans gipsies. What a strange society must that be wherein the sons of Romany turn to handiwork! The Roumanian noble possesses the soil, and his wretched peasants cultivate it after a fashion. There is no wealth in the country except corn, and cereals year by year become less

trustworthy to rely on. Such a system of agriculture is pursued that even these, the richest lands of Europe, show signs of exhaustion. Whilst Roumanian wheat falls yearly in the market, owing to its deficient weight, the actual ground under cultivation declines. Nothing can save the country but foreign science and foreign cash. That is known and confessed upon every hand; yet the French or English capitalist who has been induced to lend his money can recover neither principal nor interest. Salaries and pensions lie unpaid. The national till is as a rule positively empty. If not now, the end must come in a very short time. Whatever the issue of this war, Roumania must awake from its Anacreontic dream.

The Czar was well advised to forbid his troops a sojourn in this Capua. Their fighting qualities would not be improved by contact with a population which regards love and luxury as the sole aim of human existence. The fair have an irresistible leaning towards the brave, and pitying dark eyes bent upon the wearied soldier, soft lips cooing dulcet Latin over his hard fate, would do more mischief to discipline than long marches or rough fare. It is the cruellest stroke of destiny that such

a people should be set in this corner of Europe, between the Russian hammer and the Turkish anvil. They ask nothing of the gods—for surely their creed is Olympian—but to be left in peace to their eternal love-making, until the deluge comes and the Jews have eaten them up. It is but a very small proportion who hanker for Roumanian unity or a royal crown. They dislike, perhaps, the hard and masterful Russian even more than the Turk, but what can they do? Fate has decided—let us shrug our shoulders and make the best of it. Life goes on just the same at Bucharest. The handsome carriages in mad haste to get nowhere fill the streets as usual. Julia or Faustina, dressed in exquisite robes from Paris, reclines therein, and eyes the pavement with classic languor. The innumerable restaurants are crammed with idlers. And gentle love is still the lord of all in Bucharest.

The amusements of the place in ordinary years are many and various. If the subscription of one town, however wealthy, cannot tempt the greatest actors or singers of Europe, upon the other hand it suffices to collect both French and Italian companies of more than average merit. In the winter season there should be a crowded opera, a French

dramatic entertainment and a French *opéra comique*, a Roumanian theatre, and several *café* concerts "starred" from Paris, Italy, and sometimes Austria. The National Theatre is a pretty building, tastefully decorated, and well designed. The subscription to it never fails, let cash be as "tight" as it may; even now it is not money that lacks for opening it, but singers who have broken their engagement under fear of the war. The Roumanian theatre of operettas, the Fostulu Circu, is not so worthy of the town; France, here, is given the advantage in all things, and national spirit, national language, go to the wall. The Fostulu Circu is open every night, and I have endeavoured conscientiously to sit out a performance of that highly successful piece the '*Cimpoin draculiu*,' or 'Bagpipes of the Devil.' It impressed me so painfully that I did not care to ask the plot, nor would willingly recall past suffering by inquiries now.

The theatre is very like a barn, much dilapidated; it contains probably a couple of hundred stalls, and a pit of five hundred. On either hand is a broad platform, where spectators may sup and drink. The stage arrangements have that simplicity which recalls the Augustan age of the drama, if one would put

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into complimentary phrase the fact that all is as bare as one's hand.

The opera opened with a scene of blind-man's-buff, in which four pretty young ladies and one old and ugly slapped with all their force a being of the other sex, who talked and talked, and made no effort to catch them. This went on for about twenty minutes, the gentleman still blindfolded and still talking, the ladies punching him at intervals, and the audience listening gravely. After various entries and exits, which caused no interruption to the flood of words, entered a countryman with bagpipes under his arm. Such a magnificent specimen humanity seldom beheld as this actor. Six feet six probably in height, with a face like a statue of the best period, he seemed a very embodiment of the epic heroes famous in Roumania. But he did nothing but talk, giving the other gentleman a rest of fifteen minutes, whereof he took advantage. The women did not enter into competition, but stood in graceful attitudes, and shot out a single syllable now and then. It acted like a cut of the whip, exciting those others to deadlier loquacity. No one sat down—*il n'y avait pas de quoi*—no one sang; no one did anything but talk and listen. Presently, when both

heroes had shown signals of brain-weakness, appeared the devil, without any stir or ceremony, in form of a well-dressed gentleman, who took up the tale. He addressed the public at greater length, perhaps, than either of the mere mortals, and not until he had exhausted the dictionary, told the history of the world, and explained the mystery of his own connection therewith—not till then did we hear the first note of music, upon which the curtain fell, this act having lasted an hour. Not a sound had the audience made, and I thought them as much bored as myself, or more, since they probably understood what those terrible talkers were discoursing. Suddenly arose a storm of acclamation, bringing forward all the company. The dramatic art in Roumania has evidently its own rules. Feeling no inclination to master them, I fled, but the interminable monologue pursued me to my dreams.

Were this delightful town always such as it is today, warm in the sun, cool indoors, its narrow streets filled with carriages, and its pavement with idlers gaily dressed, there would certainly be a "rush" upon it from England. The people may be distressed and anxious, their places of amusement may be shut up, and nine-tenths of their *jeunesse dorée*

may be gone into camp, but still there is astonishing life and gaiety here. In several pretty palaces "Madame receives," and the Chaussée is full from noon till dark. This is our Hyde Park, as I have said, but wilder, if not prettier. At this time of year the foliage of its lime avenues is exquisitely tender, and the hedges, of a small leaved shrub, are pink with flower. The size of the Chaussée I have not yet explored, but there are winding paths in every direction, resonant, I believe, with nightingales in the hours of darkness, softly filled by day with the eternal protestations of Romeo and the tender sighs of Juliet. Romeo wears lemon-coloured kids, and Juliet is dressed by Worth; but spring and gentle love make her long like a very milk-maid for a *promenade dans les champs.* With perfect innocence the pair seek the Chaussée, and think themselves rustic. The young lady, of course, drives with mamma in a splendid berlane, with a Muscovite coachman who knows no pace but a gallop. The gentleman follows languidly, basking in the sunshine of life and love. So the pair wander apart and coo, whilst their elder relatives sustain a conversation which is not wholly filled with reminiscence. Not very far do the lovers saunter, for both wear beautiful shoes too

small, and neither has walked a mile since birth. The Chaussée is a terrible place for bachelors. When the carriages draw together before the *café*, and dark eyes beam upon the cavalier, and the softest accent in the world entreats him to fetch an ice, he feels his loneliness with despair; but when he flies that scene, and in each sheltered path hears the warbling of affianced lovers, his self-contempt becomes unendurable. And so it arises that there are neither bachelors nor old maids at Bucharest. But then it is not always spring in this pleasant city. But lately we had six feet of snow and a deluge; in ten days we shall have a heat super-tropical, a dust that whitens every flower and leaf, makes Juliet cough, and spoils alike the coat and the temper of Romeo. Then we sit indoors panting and do our Chaussée at midnight.

May 9, MIDNIGHT.

At this moment a caucus of the two Roumanian Chambers is sitting to decide peace or war. Most people think the conclusion foregone, and the success of ministers certain. They are determined upon war, though all the country is opposed to it. It is worth while, however, to recapitulate the arguments

which have been urged upon me to-night, with great force, by some officers high in the Roumanian service, who are neither instruments of the ministry nor enthusiasts for Russia. They recognise much more thoroughly than I could explain that the interest of their native land, as well as the inclination of her sons, should forbid active assistance to the Czar. They do not for an instant believe that any sacrifices Roumania might make would be adequately compensated. They expect no increase of territory, whether in Bessarabia or the Dobrudscha;—and yet they believe that war is a wretched necessity. The conviction of these gentlemen is not to be shaken, and whilst waiting the result I may occupy myself with a repetition of arguments which apply not only to this time but, so far as we can see, to time to come.

The army of Roumania numbers some forty thousand men, besides whom the militia counts fifty thousand. They occupy a country on the flank of Russia's advance, on her rear when she has crossed the Danube—a country flat, but backed by mountains well peopled, and, above all, by the army of Austria. The Russians have obtained permission to march through this land to make a hazardous

attack beyond it. Roumanians are convinced, with or without reason, that if the Powers had seriously prohibited a movement into their territory Russia would have given way. But the Powers declined to take such a step, and Roumania, helpless, made the best terms she could.

The Russians with great cleverness have caused it to be generally believed that they do not want the help of these forty thousand; that they would rather see Roumania neutral and quiet. The mere suggestion of such a policy causes a laugh of scorn here. How, say military men, could the Czar think of engaging in a war with Turkey on the other side of the Danube when the Roumanian army hung upon both flanks and rear? It is obviously absurd to suppose that his generals would advance under such circumstances. The professed indifference of Russia is but one more move in her great game. She was determined from the first that Roumania should march with her, and she relied upon the personal character of the Prince and the circumstances of the situation to bring about a result which she professed not to desire.

The first part of this calculation worked itself out at once. The Prince, a Hohenzollern, whose

relations are all mighty men of war, has laboured from his earliest arrival here to give Roumania an army as large and as efficient as she could bear. A rich man, he has spent his money freely for that object; an enthusiastic soldier, he has bestowed endless pains and time.

The weapon thus perfected more or less, it is in human nature to employ it, and the Prince desires nothing better than to show his own skill and the efficiency of his soldiers. But here arose a difficulty. The condition of his acquiescence was offensive to the veteran generals of Russia. He wished to command his own forces, supported by Russian regiments, in the field, and to this they would not submit. They did not trust the Roumanian soldiery then, whatever they may do now, after seeing them. Hence long delays.

The Prince was offended by the publication of a manifesto which never once alluded to him or to his army, and for a time he refused to hear of further advance in the direction which was wished. Prince Dolgoruki, an aide-de-camp of the Czar, brought him an autograph letter, which smoothed away this difficulty, and the negotiations proceeded. But the grand obstacle remained. Russia dared not leave

forty thousand soldiers and a foreign population of five million souls behind her march, whilst her generals would not be placed on an equal footing with an untried prince, though he were a Hohenzollern.

In the meanwhile, also, the Roumanian people had declared with no uncertain voice that they objected to a "policy of adventure." They could not admit, and do not now, that the formal recognition of an independence already existing in practice, nor even that the dignity of a crown for their Constitutional Sovereign, would compensate them for the hazards and losses of war. They considered that the 16,000,000 francs paid by the Russian Emperor in cash was their own property, in the first place as coming from monasteries which they were entitled to suppress, and, in the second place, that the bribe was not too high for the service already performed in letting the invader use their territory.

Thus, then, the matter stood. Russia was determined not to leave behind her march the Roumanian army, whilst she loudly declared her unwillingness to use it. The people of Roumania, and the army also, were determined not to declare war at the price. The Prince, his Cabinet, and the majority of

deputies, elected under its influence, were resolved not to split up the national forces and distribute them piecemeal amongst Russian commands. And the Russian journals, on their side, would not hear of granting the Prince a separate *corps d'armée* across the Danube, much more of entrusting any portion of their troops to his untried leadership.

The "block" seemed hopeless. To its difficulties, I think, must be referred the slow advance of Russia along the Roumanian railways. Her politicians hoped to find a means of exit, and they relied with confidence upon that Turkish stupidity which has seldom failed them in their need. The Roumanian minister, interpellated, gave a distinct assurance that the bombardment of towns occupied by a Russian force would not be considered a *casus belli*. Roumanian towns were bombarded freely, in a manner to cause loss of life and property to the citizens, but nothing followed besides protest. Within the last day or two, as might have been expected after the Turkish circular, attacks have been made upon open towns, even villages, when there were no Russians in the neighbourhood. If they had been serious attacks—if the Turks, satisfied that war must come, had inflicted a blow at the

beginning, their policy would have been intelligible. But their bombardments of Oltenitza, Becket, Kalafat, and a dozen other places have been mere insults and useless provocations, actually unintelligible save upon the supposition that they are designed to "get the range" of those towns and positions.

The result is plain enough. Roumanian army and Roumanian people are indignant. They declare that they have no longer a choice. The Turks have made war on them by the published circular, by the dismissal of their agent from Constantinople, and by active operations. A fortnight ago the Osmanli might have crossed the Danube and occupied, if they chose, those very places which they have bombarded, without stirring more indignation than their recent acts have caused. The blunders of Turkey in the last two years have been enormous; but not one of them was so stupid, not one played so frankly and so easily into the hands of Russia, as the attack, not unprovoked, yet none the less foolish, upon Roumanian towns. By so doing the Turks have aroused that sense of national honour which dwells in every people. Against their interest and their inclination Roumanians believe that they must fight at last. They hold themselves to be betrayed on

every hand, and bitterly accuse the Powers, which, by their dread of responsibility, have suffered matters to reach this point. And I am sure that the sentiment is honest. The Prince and the small clique of Radicals in power have their own views, but neither public nor army could have been forced into war save by the insults of Turkey.*

In the army, as elsewhere, rules a feeling of angry bewilderment. What, it is asked, can Roumania have to gain by fighting? The only reply is, independence, and perhaps a royal title; as a remote possibility also that delectable land the Dobrudscha. When once stated in words, and challenged by the able minority of patriots, the scheme appears so monstrously wicked as to be unavowable. After feeling their way, and finding it impassable, the Government has turned about. It declares in public and private, with vows and even with tears, that Roumania shall preserve neutrality. Not one of her subjects shall be risked in this quarrel, unless the Turks attack. At the same time it decrees a *levée en masse*, and strongly reinforces the garrisons at Kalafat and Giurgevo. The public cannot but look to these

* The alleged bombardments were enormously exaggerated, where not invented, for the very purpose which they served.

quarters with suspicion. Rightly or wrongly it expects to hear, not of an occupation, but of raids and outrages by the Turks. It believes that the firing upon the Turkish gunboat at Ibraila was an attempt to make the *casus belli*, which failed because too publicly and palpably unjust. The adventure will be tried again, when there are fewer witnesses. I give you only the sad impression ruling here. Nobody believes that the Prince has given up his idea, nor the Ministry theirs. I have before told you that these gentlemen are Republicans—almost Communists. If they encourage the mistake of their sovereign it is not for his ultimate benefit. They believe in a Roumanian Republic, which in process of time will take its place in the grand commonwealth of Europe. If it be urged that Russia would allow no such experiment on her borders, they smile, with a calm assurance that Russia will herself be republican. This war is a grand epoch for red politicians. It has been caused by them against the efforts of every European monarch and the whole conservative feeling of the world. I am assured by an officer just returned from a mission to Kischeneff, where his duties kept him for some weeks in attendance on the staff, that even now the court is bitterly

regretful, and superior officers are very anxious. They hail the war with enthusiasm as war, but the history of it alarms them. In a pitched battle lasting for months they and their emperor have been defeated by the men of the revolution. We heard all this in England long since, and people have ceased to believe it, but I am sure my informant did not get his ideas from the same source. He repeated what was freely said at Kischeneff. The regimental Russian officers are Nihilist almost to a man. Nowhere has that revolutionary creed made such progress as in the army, and though discipline is strict, its chiefs regard the future with anxiety. For the same reason does the Roumanian Cabinet regard it with hope.

CHAPTER II.

ROUND PLOESTI.

PLOESTI, *May* 23.

THE more one sees of this country, the more distinctly does it prove to be a monstrous and delightful anachronism. One dwells in it surrounded by contradictions, puzzles, and absurdities; one feels that the people have begun civilisation at the wrong end, that if the Roumanian view be correct, the working nations of the universe have been in error for all time past. There are lands in which the inhabitants of the capital are a race differing apparently from those of the province, speaking another language, possessed by other thoughts and ambitions. It is not so here. The peculiarities of Bucharest appear in every town, the character of the peasant is that of the boyard. But in small places like this, wherein the Grand Duke has pitched his tent for the moment, oddities become more striking. Ploesti covers a great space of ground, and I should fancy that its aristo-

crats own a vast possibility of wealth, as one may say. It is approached through a characteristic landscape, divided between two zones. There is a zone of forest and a zone of plough-land; look through the carriage window as often as you will the same picture lies in view. If the low-lying track be not edged by trees most exquisitely green and tender of foliage, it will be running through an endless plain. Very far off, a pale blue line of mountains may sometimes suggest that the whole universe is not flat. At this time of year the level has charms of its own, reminding one of *veldt* lands in Cape Colony. Swaths of yellow colza bar it, and acres of wild strawberry in full blossom, belts of iris round a marsh, break the eternal green. Here and there a white-clad peasant scratches at the earth with a wooden plough, to which, for the look of the thing, he has harnessed six bullocks. So shallow are the furrows that small strips of weedy ground escape between them, and tares wave in triumph behind the track of that guileless husbandman. But with no better preparation he will raise a crop that might make the prairie farmer jealous, and madden with despair our scientific agriculturist at home. Pity it is to see how narrow are the streaks of brown in that great sea of

weeds, and how often the females of the household are helping at the plough. Those stalwart fellows who should have been aiding are with us here in the train, equipped at the price of their country's ruin, for a war which nobody wants, saving always those who hope to "fish in troubled waters."

The strategical reason which caused the Russian chiefs to make Ploesti their headquarters is self-evident upon the map. All day long the trains of baggage and artillery come filing in by the road from Ibraila without a break. The horses—nearly all young—step well through the deep black soil; the men, dirty and unkempt, as are all troops upon campaign, have an admirable spirit and good-humour. There are always officers waiting at the entrance of the town, who observe the waggons and men as they pass by. At four o'clock this afternoon General Nepoititchky himself, the chief of the staff, did not disdain to undertake the duty. Motionless upon a beautiful white horse, he watched the uninteresting procession for nearly two hours—uninteresting at least it seemed to me, waiting an audience with his Excellency. At intervals of the interminable train, the baggage guards passed by, a score of men marching with free step, though caked to the knees in mud.

Then the General always pushed through the crowd, and whilst the men presented arms he uttered a word or two. The reply always came in a short, sharp, startling cheer; the soldiers passed briskly on, and the General resumed his station. How many vehicles I saw pass, how many baggage guards I heard cheer, none but a "calculating boy" could estimate, but the sum was one *à faire rêver*. Not to-day nor this week did the procession begin, nor will it end to-morrow.

The town into which these vehicles are pouring is a little Bucharest—less wealthy, of course, dirtier, possibly more idle. The holes in the streets are deeper, and filled to the brim with mud, for rain is constant at Ploesti—whence the name. Very wide streets are bordered with stucco houses tumbling down, but not tumbling from age, for the greater part are new. On the lower floor dwells a tailor or a tobacconist; from the upper windows dark eyes peep round a blind, catch the stranger's glance, and modestly vanish. So, as you limp along the break-neck pavement, it happens at every house. There are, indeed, a certain number of shops devoted neither to smoke nor dress, but they are scarcely worth counting. Sometimes also the eyes may be blue

instead of black, but there they will surely be, of one colour or another. And the gallants of Ploesti, young and old, joyously try to entrap those modest maidens into an answering look. With perseverance they generally succeed. For from her birth the young lady has heard, has talked, has dreamed of love—so has the young man. No age is preserved from Cupid here, no dignity forbids his reception. The Lord Chancellor and the Archbishop of Canterbury, were they Roumanians, would think it quite natural and correct to go courting in full robes, nor would anybody protest.

This is what I mean by saying that the world here is upside-down. It makes the pleasures and the trifles the business of life, and leaves work to Jews and gipsies. Not the rich people only thus behave. In every class, at every age, and at all hours, love is the one thought. If the Roumanian could be serious even in this, his dearest occupation, the country would be depopulated by jealous lovers and indignant wives. On the contrary, crimes of violence are very few, and seldom caused by jealousy. Like good-natured children, lovers pout a little, and cry a little, when disappointed, but their thoughts soon flit away and settle on another object. The facility of divorce

here, unequalled in any land, savage or civilised, is a needful consequence of the national manners. I was shown the other day a lovely creature, of royal blood and great wealth, who had twice divorced herself and once been divorced by her husband. She is now about to marry for the fourth time, at twenty-six years old. Is not this a state of society to bewilder one—for there are many such cases, some worse, and thousands not quite so bad?

Round Ploesti stand such pretty houses as I have described in Bucharest, little gems of beauty and comfort. Here, of course, they are not so sumptuously adorned, but the villa of the Grand Duke is handsome. The old Roumanian hotel, almost extinct in the capital, may be found here, and is worth description. Along three sides of an immense courtyard run lofty galleries, covered in with glass. Upon these open the windows of the bedrooms, tiny dens, in which no privacy is possible. One perceives that ladies are not expected to travel here. The staircases run to the gallery. In the courtyard stand a few acacias, a few oleanders struggling towards the light, and a great number of those coloured glass globes which, mounted upon a pole, are more than equivalent, in the Roumanian

eye, to flowers. I have seen a meadow thus adorned in which the owner stood with rapt delight, as a devoted amateur might stand among his roses.

Amongst the acacias and the oleanders people dine, weather permitting, but for rainy nights there is a pavilion along one side of the courtyard; a wooden building full of taste in shape and decoration, so bright of colour, so gracefully carved, that one is pleased to look at it. There of an evening come the *laütari*, or gipsy minstrels, another institution of the land. They play wild tunes and sing till midnight, always by ear; or else they seize a waltz—French or German—transform it, with notes new and strange, into a barbaric chant, and the public of Ploesti come to drink beer and listen for form's sake—in reality to make love. A charming example I had under my eye ten minutes since. A happy, substantial dame marched in, escorted by an elderly gentleman of position. Her two daughters followed, with a youth highly dressed, newly shaved, pomaded. The young ladies were very pretty and very well behaved; they could not but smile at the witticisms of their companion, whom they answered in the lowest possible tones. But their smiles were of such nature as to stir agony all round; bitter feelings

convulsed the population of the neighbourhood. From six or eight tables in a circle looks deadly and imploring were fixed alternately upon the favoured youth and his charges. Other youths came up to their friend and audibly begged an introduction. To no purpose. The ladies still smiled and still laughed prettily, nor did their parent set an example of compassion. She also becked and wreathed her comely features for the distraction of the old magistrate. So savage with jealousy grew all the male sex about that I looked for another fight of Lapithæ. But at the critical moment arrived two more young ladies, also with an elder relative, yet more charming than the first pair, whose inconstant admirers straightway turned their backs to fall into a new enthusiasm. The twin Ariadnes deserted showed not the least surprise, jealousy, or disappointment. Their languid smiles were almost more sweet, when given only to one. So far as I have observed, the Roumanian coquette is amongst the most dangerous of her order. Giving her whole mind and life to the art for which she is granted unusual advantages by nature, she reaches a proficiency not to be excelled.

I have said but little of the Russians in Ploesti, for, in fact, they are not prominent at all. A num-

ber of Circassians in superb uniform wander about; officers of the staff hurry by; a company of infantry covers the square. But the troops remain outside during the short period they stop here. I have seen, however, for the first time, a drunken soldier, and heard one or two more. But there have been no complaints, I understand, and certainly these heroes seemed amiable enough. I can answer for it that their lungs are not affected by seven months' life under canvas. Such fine roaring is not commonly heard outside a wild beast show. The sober Roumanians were quite shocked by the din, but it was all sound and fury, signifying nothing. Strange, indeed, the fact would be if, amongst 280,000 men passing through a town, a few were not found unable to resist temptation. I hope and trust that our English soldiers would behave as well as do these, but I dare not avouch it. What a contrast does this invasion of Roumania present beside all former ones! We see more and more plainly how vast will be the influence of the German army of 1870 upon humanity itself. Not alone did it revolutionise the science of war, but it also changed its nature. The brutality of old days has gone, killed by Prussian example. When Russia takes the lesson so seriously to heart,

who will dare return to the ways of barbarism? But let it not be forgotten to whose stern teaching the change is due.

May 30.

The house in which the Grand Duke has taken quarters here might have been built for his occupation. Standing above the road, white and graceful of outline, with handsome steps rising to its first floor between beds of flowers, it looks up and down towards Russia and Turkey. Every soldier who goes south by road must pass before it; his Highness needs but step from his *salon* on to the covered balcony, shaded with flowering creepers, hour by hour, to observe the progress of the invasion. To-day he spent a length of time there—with pleasure, I should think, for the 9th Brigade of the 30th Division, belonging to the Third Corps d'Armée, defiled before him.

Upon arrival here I was instantly warned of the *fête*, but hurrying crowds would have announced it to a stranger. A Roumanian crowd is dirty, ragged, and barefoot, but it is not picturesque. When the gay toilettes, handsome carriages, and quaint luxury of Bucharest are absent, one sees but a squalid

throng everywhere, such as the gendarmes and whitecoated Russian officers kept back along each border of the wide rugged street before headquarters. A magnificent group stood by the open gates of the garden. Three Circassians lounged there, types of manly beauty and superb costume. I have not been paralysed with admiration as yet when observing a number of these warriors, but here and there will be seen a model of human beauty. Such, as it chanced, were the three officers before the gate, two in blue uniform, silver lace, silver cartridge cases, the other in drab and silver. Amongst, but not of them, stood a Montenegrin, tall as themselves, whose wild grey eyes and tawny, curled moustache contrasted finely with their grand features and Oriental contour. He was simply ablaze with crimson and gold. Man's imagination never sketched a costume so gorgeous, and at the same time so martial, as that of the Montenegrin, and be sure that the Grand Duke's suite spare no gold lace nor fantastic embroidery upon crimson silk.

Half-a-dozen staff officers sat on horseback under the balcony, where his Highness had already taken his place. One easily understands, looking at him,

how the staff, and all others, indeed, who come into contact with the Grand Duke, have grown to feel an enthusiastic regard for him as their leader. He looks every inch a prince amongst his officers, taller than any except his son. The Grand Duke's face and manner are simple, kindly, soldierlike in short. He has a ready laugh and much genial humour, which are freely indulged without impairing that dignity which befits royal blood. Such is the report of all who come within his influence, and one does not doubt it after a single glance at the manly, pleasant face above them.

The brigade about to pass has marched some thousand versts, from the north of Bessarabia. To-day, after five miles' tramping, they have enjoyed a long halt at the Bulgarian camp. They come fresh from thence, but their uniforms are threadbare, even patched, their boots worn, and they are grey from head to foot with dust. It is only in Roumania that one can stand, as I do, in a puddle whilst one chokes with whirling grit. Dirty and unkempt the men stride by, sturdily carrying their heavy knapsacks and their *tentes d'abri*. The foremost ranks straighten up and go in a line tolerably solid, but every eye in the red grimy faces is raised with curiosity, and as

the files proceed they tumble into formations to astonish their drill-sergeant. It is strange and impressive to watch the sudden turn of white eyeballs upward as company after company becomes aware that the Grand Duke is looking at them. I fancy the men had not known that he would be waiting. As the first ranks passed, his Highness called, in a clear, sharp voice—"I greet you, heroic children!" and the company answered, "We greet you, Prince!" After this a staff officer beneath the balcony signalled for cheers, and I am bound to say that he signalled without remarkable effect; one-third, if not one-half, of the men neither responded nor professed to do so, whilst of the remainder many did no more than open their dry mouths and keep them wide. I do not mean to draw conclusions from this; I only state a fact the importance of which I am not at all capable of weighing. Of those, all upon the side nearest to the Grand Duke, who cheered—not very loud nor long—a great number did so with a laugh. It may be the Russian mode of showing affection and enthusiasm to laugh in such a manner, or there may have been a secret joke that passed all down the street; certainly the old general gesticulating with his sword for cheers was not a grave subject to contemplate.

But the antique spirit of devotion, wherever it may have failed, survives in the officer class. One saw it in the flash of the eyes, the rapt look of each as he saluted and marched by. I observed a tall and bearded subaltern, who might have hailed from Aberdeen, so exactly did he present that type. The man's eyes positively burned with enthusiasm. He saw nothing, neither the crowd nor his own men; but stalked along, haggard with excitement, his whole soul fixed upon the brother of the Czar. One beholds an expression like that at revival meetings; painters try to render it in the wild gaze of saint or bigot. The Czar, I imagine, sees it often enough, the Pope sometimes, the Sultan seldom. Perhaps the Grand Duke recognised his worshipper, for he cried a greeting quite out of turn. The enthusiast's lips moved, but they uttered no sound. He passed from view, as the ranks succeeded, but when I last saw him his head was turned upwards and back, his eyes were fixed, dry and glowing, upon the balcony. That man, I should think, is certain to die in the first battle. There are not many of his sort left, whether in Russia or elsewhere. Civilisation, like a plane, is smoothing down all our knots and angles.

I cannot tell whether the Prince was satisfied with

the reception given him, but he could not fail to be pleased with his troops. The 9th Brigade of the 30th Division consists of young stout men, averaging a lower height than in most others I have seen. Ragged and dirty as they are they show excellent spirit; marching thus heavily loaded, under sun-rays that fell upon them like molten lead, they sang and laughed gaily. The seven months of camp life which have destroyed their uniforms have hardened their bodies to fine condition. At the same time it must be observed that the train of waggons carrying sick was much longer than the Prince could have liked to see. The extraordinary weather of this spring has begun to produce the results expected, both upon man and horse. Ophthalmia has increased, fever and dysentery have set in. An army is never free from these latter complaints, nor would I let your readers understand that the general health is such as to cause alarm. But it is much lower in tone than a fortnight since, and doctors, above all, wish that the Danube was fairly traversed. In this country great heats immediately following rain are looked to with dread. We have hit upon just such weather, and its consequences have been felt within the last twenty-four

hours. But the hale men of the brigade which passed to-day were soldiers to be relied on.

I saw an incident which quite confirmed my bad opinion of the traces used by Russian artillery. Whilst the guns of the brigade passed by at a jog trot, the troops in advance halted so suddenly that some confusion followed. A restive leading horse, pulled up violently to prevent him running down an hospital attendant, backed upon the team. In an instant the traces were stepped over, in and out, as they lay on the ground. Order was restored with wonderful quickness, but if the ropes had been of moderate length horses could not have so entangled themselves. No cavalry travelled with the brigade, which marches south at fifteen miles a day.

Great preparations are making for the Czar. A handsome house in the Strada Prefectura has been engaged for him, and Bucharest upholsterers are fitting it with curtains and carpets worthy of the tenant. An old building close by has been taken for the suite, and a crowd of masons, chiefly women, are breaking down walls, opening doorways, and reconstructing passages, to put the two dwellings into communication. The works progress with a good deal of merriment, amidst a large consumption

of tobacco. Troops of female artisans pass to and fro amongst the peach-trees and the rugged parterres of the garden, conversing with great spirit about the wonders they are going to perform. At present the most serious operation they have achieved is to block the street with mortar-beds, heaps of stone, and piles of ancient brick. To contemplate this triumph evidently gives them sufficient occupation for the time. They observe progress in a leisurely manner, knocking two bricks together the while, or thoughtfully stirring a sea of mud which they call mortar. Perhaps things will be ready for the Czar on his arrival, for work does get itself done in this country as elsewhere. But the Russians talk of setting a fatigue party of their soldiers on the business.

June 4.

WHILST waiting for that seal upon my official safe-conduct which the *commandant de place* alone can give, I received an invitation from General Radovitz, of the 2nd Roumanian Corps d'Armée, to accompany him to his new command beyond the Oltu. The *commandant de place*, General Stein,

is still at Kischeneff, and after two visits to Ploesti in hopes of finding him I have begun to despair. The long delay in his arrival is further evidence—though quite unnecessary—how calculations have been upset by one misfortune or another. He should have travelled with the Grand Duke, but it was early seen that the staff must be divided, to reunite as opportunity should offer. General Stein lingers to the last, and no one can fix a date when he may be expected.

Accordingly I was glad to accept General Radovitz's polite invitation, and though circumstances arising at the latest moment detained the General for twenty-four hours, I left for Karakal with his staff at 8 a.m. on Sunday. Those who have followed the strategical history of the war will remember this as one of the places at which the Russian army was said to be concentrating. Current reports at Bucharest spoke of forty thousand men at the least already gathered there, with enormous trains of every sort, and nobody doubted; for Karakal is a point of obvious value for such a purpose. It lies twenty miles or so from Piatra Station, on the Crajova Railway, between that line and Islatz, that is, the mouth of the Oltu. Turnu-Magurelli, where the

serious preparations that are being made prove that a great movement will be effected there, lies opposite to Islash, five miles by road, on the other side of the river. To relieve the traffic upon the direct route to Turnu-Magurelli, Russian corps might be expected to march through Karakal to their destination; and what more likely than that they should choose a town so sequestered for their great depot on this line? Nothing could hinder them except the convention which forbade Russians to pass the Oltu—a convention which the Roumanians did not at all rely upon.

So when travellers reported the formation of a crowded camp at Slatina, the news soon spread that Karakal was swarming with Muscovites. Nobody knows anything at Bucharest, saving foreigners, and I am bound to admit that nobody cares. One could not easily have believed that interest or curiosity would not induce some influential person to ascertain and to report with authority the real facts concerning the occupation of a place like Karakal. But so it was. One continually repeated to another that the Russians lay in force at Karakal, and nobody contradicted. I went to see, and I found not a soldier nor a Cossack.

This and all other lines are now handed over to the invaders. A Russian stationmaster directs the service, Russian soldiers mount guard on the platform, Russian sentries protect the line and bridges, presenting arms to every train. Their duty is not unpleasant, nor are they overworked. The railway is single, and all the activity of these new stationmasters cannot drive many trains along. Though the sun be cruel already, hard-headed Russians scarcely feel it beneath the little shed of withering boughs which they have built. When the train comes by they sally out, and stand, knee deep in flowers and lush grass, like white statues amongst the green, with their rifles at "present." Those off duty lie full length in ponds and muddy brooks, rousing bitter envy in the breasts of first-class passengers, parched, dusty, and perspiring. Now and again one sees a Roumanian village, looking, I must admit, much like a Kaffir kraal, only not so clean. Its huts, thatched with grey reed, are partly buried in the earth. One descends to the door by a steep incline, and the rough windows just peep above the ground. Children, half naked, run down to cheer us; women rest, hoe in hand, and gravely observe the phenomenon; men throw their long

hair from their eyes and peer at us with savage wonder.

For an artist these people have many beauties both of feature and expression, even of costume, but all so masked by dirt that unæsthetic persons turn from them with disgust to admire the blooming earth in which they burrow. Roumania is not so rich in flowers, at this time of the year at least, as Servia, but it has abundance—the commonest, monkshood, cornflower, Canterbury bell, bedstraw, iris, and that red spike of blossom which Ophelia calls, I think, "love in idleness." These make a sheet of varied colour beside the railway. Later will come in hollyhocks, gladiolus, wild flax, gentian, the large anemones which we cultivate, and asparagus. But most beautiful is a species of dog-rose, far more deeply and more delicately tinted than our own, which springs but a few inches high amongst the grass, and throws up its garlands of large flowers in a cluster. In the far East I have admired the same effect of colour and grouping on a marsh overrun with pink lotus.

At Slatina are two camps, full of men, horses, cannon, and waggons. One of them dips over the brow of a slight ridge, which prevents one from

forming more than a guess at its size. I was tempted to stop and observe the "humours" of a Russian camp, but experience had convinced me that until the *commandant de place* shall have affixed his stamp upon one's photograph, no powers short of magic will carry one past those stolid sentries. The next station to Slatina, across the marshy Oltu, is Piatra, where a diligence, eight-horsed, and sundry vehicles of nondescript character, were waiting to carry the general and his staff to their headquarters. General Radovitz had been detained, as I have mentioned, but the rest of us drove gaily towards Karakal, leaving a mountain of luggage for the servants to bring along.

Setting out from Bucharest at 8 a.m., we reached Piatra at 4 p.m. and Karakal at 8 p.m., passing on the way a half-company of Russian sappers. They had halted for the night at a little village, and the inhabitants were giving them an entertainment. It took the form of a dance. I had not hitherto seen a festivity of this sort in Roumania, and the young officer in charge of the small detachment was but too pleased to be a cicerone. Quite a boy, frank and courteous, as are nearly all his fellows, he had apparently no companion except a large brown dog

—quite a charming dog, but untrained to relieve the tedium of the march with conversation. This was the greater pity, because he showed breeding, intelligence, and humour. It was his, not our human sagacity which perceived the delightful fact that the village matrons were seated upon the chimney of their subterranean dwellings, and from that coign of vantage were criticising our behaviour. We, simple mortals, had supposed them perched upon natural elevations of the ground. The dog undeceived us, expressing his astonishment by barks of inquiry, as though to say, "Look here! Is this as it should be or not?" If the animal did not mean just so much, neither more nor less, his master and I are alike obtuse. After reassuring the intelligent creature by the consideration that in Roumania, as in Rome, one must accept Roman customs, we went on to observe the national dance. Russian sappers, crowded round, were watching with envy and delight. They made way for us, and we saw some gymnastic combinations most creditable in such heat. To the music of a fiddle, a score of stalwart peasants, hand in hand, flung themselves to and fro, kicked up their heels, and chanted feverishly. First one, then another, threw himself almost to the

ground, and sprawled and tossed his limbs about with such vigour as made one hot only to look at him. A strange contrast this with the Servian, Russian, and Bulgarian dances. To see aught like it one must go as far as France.

Karakal is said to have been founded by Caracalla. He was a very wicked man, and in one of his most cynic fits he must have established the horrid little place that bears his name. Words such as I can command would not do justice to its squalor. There is, strangely enough, an hotel quite clean and decent, but the landlord of it will not supply so much as a cup of coffee to his guests. For that they must go into the streets, where may be found, under local guidance, two foul dens of mud called restaurants. At one of these, recommended as the best beyond comparison, I dined with the staff. Years and experience make one callous; the sight of human misery in many lands forbids one to sympathise with small troubles; the knowledge that one may fare worse still to-morrow renders a man tolerant of to-day's annoyance. But if pity ever struggled in my throat with laughter it was at Karakal, dining with the staff of General Radovitz in the best restaurant of the town, where these devoted ones are to stop for a time indefinite.

The entertainment took place under a shed, in a meadow strewn with old planks and broken bottles. The restaurateur had but one lantern, irrevocably fixed in a corner. He owned, indeed, candles without candlesticks, which we tried vainly to keep alight five seconds together. Failing in this attempt, we sat like ghouls and awaited the provender. Shadowy dogs roamed amongst us, bats and night birds flitted in and out astonished. What was finally given us to devour in this obscurity I cannot tell, for the sense of sight failed me, and no tongue could describe the dish. Judging by a brief and awful taste, I took it to consist of old rags and candle ends tied up in cabbage-leaves and set afloat in sour milk. It proved to be far too "national" for the eclectic gentlemen of the staff, and after certain other trials we fell back upon boiled eggs. Agonised councils followed, and one junior after another was entreated, nay, commanded, to organise a "mess." I am afraid the idea would not answer, if tried. Roumanians are not a people to combine for any object.

My intention had been to pass from Karakal to Islatz by carriage, a distance of fifty miles; thence to Turnu-Magurelli, across the Oltu, and so, as time should serve, along the Danube to Simnitza, and thus to Bucharest; or direct from Turnu-Magurelli. It

was almost certain that the *commandant de place*, upon whom so many hopes were fixed, would come to Ploesti before the Czar's arrival, and I did not wish to lose a day in putting myself straight with the Russian authorities. A nice calculation of hours showed that I might at least visit Turnu-Magurelli without danger of losing time. Accordingly, after that famous meal, the deadly fun of which I shall not soon forget, I assembled the horsekeepers of Karakal, and began to bargain. But whilst we were haggling, a frozen wind began suddenly to blow through my open windows, and the council fled in haste. Ten minutes after the rain came down in sheets, and lasted through the night. Every time I awoke, to hear the heavy downfall, I knew that my chance of reaching Turnu-Magurelli was lessening with each minute. When the rain ceased, at dawn, nobody would be so rash as to undertake the charge of me. One venturesome person offered to try his luck, at a heavy sum, if I would go all the way to Slatina, there to join the *chaussée* or high road. I declined, of course, for time did not allow me a detour of fifty miles, and in great disappointment I set back by the way I came. Such observations as I am permitted to send upon

the movements and disposition of the Russian army you have already received. Certain others I made, and forwarded by telegraph last night, but two hours afterwards a courteous request was brought to me to call at the office, for repayment of the fifty francs or so which I had disbursed. The *visa* was refused. Having no wish to give information which the Russian authorities would keep secret—having, in fact, promised not to do so—I do not repeat, even by letter, the details forbidden. Suffice it that there is not, nor has there ever been, a Russian force across the Oltu.

June 5.

After three visits to Ploesti, I have at length obtained the official permit, seal and badge and all. I am now at liberty to write or telegraph what I please, provided it relates neither to movements of troops nor composition of columns, nor anything useful for the enemy to know. I can approach a Russian camp, and proudly demand speech of the general. My number is nine upon the company of correspondents, and the fact is registered on an enormous brass plate, six inches across, which I am supposed

to wear upon my arm. It bears a double eagle at the top, "Correspondent" in huge Russian letters across the face, and a vast red seal between the ponderous "No." and the exaggerated "9," biggest of all.

The presentation of this object was one of the drollest scenes I ever bore part in. After my formal interview with General Stein, whose politeness was as genial as that of all other magnates in this army, I went, under guidance of a Cossack, to the Chancellerie. There sat a handsome, portly captain, in the white cotton tunic which is most becoming when well made. After identifying my photograph, comparing it with the one in his possession, and verifying the different inscriptions upon it, he called for the stamp, and marked it with the double eagle. Next he chose, with particular care, one of the brass soup-plates beside him. His broad shoulders began to quiver as he solemnly rose and presented the thing to me. Struck with dismay, I faltered out a question as to its use. The captain, very red in the face, fitted it upon each arm, on his big chest, on the top of his head; slung it to an imaginary sash, bent it round his forehead, put it on the chair to sit upon —his merry features working all the while, and his

veins swollen with laughter. At the last happy thought he burst into a roar—so did I, so did the Cossacks, and all in the house. Such frank, hearty, catching merriment one has not often the pleasure to hear. When we had all finished, the big seal was attached, and we laughed again to see the captain burn his fingers. The bitterness of the soup-plate almost vanishes when I recollect with what hearty fun it was delivered to me.

June 6.

I have just seen the event which will preserve in history the name of this horrid little town. Endless rumours of delay have circulated since first we heard of the Czar's intended visit, but punctual to the day, and even the hour, he has fulfilled his word. He will set no example of inexactitude. This evening, the 25th of May, old style, at eight o'clock, as was stated in the original despatch, he duly arrived.

There is no concealment of the regret which most loyal Russians feel for their Sovereign's determination. He can do no possible good in the field unless to stifle jealousies which are not really important; but his presence may effect mischief.

With him travel a number of officials, who naturally possess an influence which they have constant opportunities to exercise. The practical soldiers surrounding the Grand Duke are anxious to know how that influence will be used, whilst fearing that the real necessities of the situation will be less considered than the desire for a speedy success. They are not certain that the idea of the visit was not suggested to his Majesty by some members of his *entourage*, and upon this hypothesis they build a tower of doubts.

I thus hint at feelings which display themselves, but, after all, there is no evidence to justify them; they may turn out to be mere groundless suspicions, and be forgotten. But the utility of the Czar's presence at headquarters is a matter quite independent of those considerations. He will cost a great deal of money, he will cause immense anxiety, and there is reason to fear that at some critical moment he may interfere with operations carefully planned and deliberately undertaken. It is said that he has become unable longer to endure the delays and the hopes deferred which no explanatory despatches could account for.

For no less event, I suppose, than a visit of the

Emperor of Russia could the pavements of Ploesti have been repaired. Vast and varied homage has the Czar received in his twenty-two years' reign, and possibly he does not observe this compliment. But it is grand and even touching. For days past the female population of the place has been wheeling barrows of strange construction, shovelling gravel, transporting stones upon a tray. The men, meanwhile, cross-legged, and cigarette in mouth, have leisurely been digging up the ancient pavement, or loading carts of stone, or staring. By very serious efforts of this sort, three or four streets which the Czar is likely to traverse have been levelled. The filthy drain still runs down their middle, and the pigs still lie side-deep therein. But the horses of the Czar devour the earth, and at the thunder of their gallop it is thought that the pigs will fly unperceived.

Beside this mending of their ways, the people of Ploesti did not trouble themselves much. A triumphal arch they raised, and those who had carpets hung them out of window as if to air. Flags waved, and the Bulgarian legion, after much countermarching, safely drew up by the curbstone, along each side of the route, from station to palace.

At 4 p.m. all was in order, and those enthusiasts who would rather doubt the imperial word than run a risk of missing the imperial sight drove to the railway in a motley cavalcade; phlegmatic people went to dinner at their usual time, and still enjoyed an ample opportunity to criticise the spectators, hot and weary.

Upon the platform was drawn up a company of Bulgarians, and their Metropolitan stood at the back to offer bread and salt. A few little girls, holding flowers, looked ready to cry with fatigue and heat. Functionaries and officers filled the small space with plumes and gold and colour. In the rude square without, a number of good carriages were waiting, each drawn by four steeds abreast, and driven by a very Jehu, wearing a crown of peacock feathers round his hat of fur. Behind these stood dingy vehicles innumerable, drawn from all the neighbourhood.

At 8 p.m. precisely, the engine, flagged and flowered, drove into the station, and landed his Majesty just in front of the Bulgarians. He stepped out actively, and as the colours were bent, said a few words of courteous acknowledgment. Then the Archbishop advanced, behind a massive silver

plateau carried by two acolytes, whereon stood a big loaf and a salt-cellar. The Czar tasted a morsel of the bread, cut for him, and listened to a brief address of welcome, which, in spite of rumours to the contrary, had no special significance.

Thereafter, amidst cheers and clanging of the Russian hymn, he entered a carriage, his brother followed, and the four piebald horses, all abreast, plunged off at a gallop. They are superb animals, and the coachman knows how to show their beauty. This kind of driving is barbarous, if you will, unsafe, and rather like the sort of thing one expects at a circus—but magnificent when well done. The horses are all over the road, tossing their heads, sidling, plunging, but they come like a hurricane. The wild driver, with arms outspread, has them all in hand, for he and they are chosen from ten thousand. Before the carriage three Circassians bound at their utmost speed, and after it comes a squadron, riding for life. The Czar seems pale and worn beside his kindly looking brother. After the escort come dozens of carriages, all with four horses abreast, more or less handsome. A crowd of officers break through the mob and dash across the unfenced meadow at full gallop, to strike the road farther on.

At every thud of their horses' hoofs the dust leaps up and shrouds them to the very helmet. Dimly looming through the cloud we see the tops of carriages, swords and helmets sparkling, horses' heads tossed up in the foaming excitement of the race. It is a curious picture, and a fine one, though blurred with dust. One thinks somehow of Gérome's 'Courriers du Pacha,' of Tadema's 'Pyrrhic Dance,' and of George Stubbs' 'Horses of Phaeton.' Something of each of these may be caught in the mad scurry.

In the civilian world his Majesty's visit has already caused some disturbance. The police have grown very strict, both here and at Bucharest, demanding everybody's passport. Some persons have been requested to leave the capital and take up their quarters elsewhere for a time. I do not know whether the Russians have ordered, or even are acquainted with, these measures, which have been executed by the Roumanian police.

Three gentlemen, alleging themselves to be correspondents of the German press, were suddenly arrested yesterday, whilst sitting in the courtyard of this hotel. They were politely requested to step upstairs, their luggage and papers were packed,

and they themselves marched to the police office. I can hear no more of them, but it is certain that one had behaved indiscreetly in alleging that a pass had been granted him, and thus abusing the courtesy of Russian officers. To-morrow the Czar will parade the Bulgarian legion, and on Friday he will visit Bucharest for a day.

CHAPTER III.

ALONG THE DANUBE.

June 12.

THE high road, *chaussée,* as Roumanians call it, turns suddenly inland at Giurgevo, and makes a prodigious angle before reaching Turnu-Magurelli. There is a track along the Danube bank which should be quite practicable in this month of June, but it is still submerged in parts. Marshes stretch without a break as far as Simnitza, and they are all flooded. Knowing that the Russians have been better advised than to establish themselves in that fever den, I took, without much reluctance, the inland road, and, after six hours' hard travel, found myself at the end of the bridge which leads into Alexandrei. Very hot the drive had been, very dusty, and very dull. No Russians had we seen, nor any trace of war since leaving Giurgevo, if we except the Cossack rover, whose good-humoured, dirty face and very ugly back are the commonest

feature of the Roumanian landscape just now. He, indeed, passed us now and then, so did peasants, white-clad, long-haired, classic and ferocious, who drove clumsy waggons harnessed with six horses, four abreast as leaders and two on the pole, or two horses and two bullocks as a four-in-hand.

These carried flour towards Giurgevo. Other movement there was none. Along the slow plains, for miles together, the drooping ears of barley stretched in grey waves to the horizon. Then, for miles, a pale-green sheet of maize; and then, for leagues, a desert of burnt grass, weeds, and thistles. I have seen the *veldt* lands of the Cape, and in my ignorance have cried, "This is desolation." I have crossed the Grand Sahara, and repeated with conviction what elder travellers have said of it. But for downright loneliness and miserable solitude I will back Roumania against any spot in the world. The desert is awful; the *veldt*, if unpeopled, is full of life and colour. But in Roumania, amongst these upland plains, if one spy in the distance a peasant working, the view of that white figure, miles away, a single speck in the bare horizon, makes a man shudder. No hut stands in sight. He seems to have no fellows in his toil, and his presence, like

Selkirk's voice in the island, only makes the solitude more thrilling.

From time to time, of course, one reaches the village whence this lonely wretch has travelled to his work. At a distance it reminds one of a Kaffir kraal nestling in a kloof. The same reed roofs, grey-brown of colour, the same fences of thorn, well set in mud, the same broken look of the ground, channeled and cut by rain. Yellow acacias line the street here as there, though they have another name in botany, and here as there the colour prevailing is brown, save where hidden watercourses lead towards the dam. But, upon approach, one reluctantly admits that the Kaffir must not be insulted by comparisons. Seeing the dirt and untidiness around, before one gains the village one already likens it to a kraal of Hottentots or Kaffirs; when once inside, with pain and pity, it grows evident that Bushmen alone in negroland dwell as wretchedly, as filthily, as these Christians of Eastern Europe.

Their houses rise but a few feet, six at the utmost, above ground. What can be seen of them, as a rule, is a heap of mud, rounded, overgrown with weeds and grass, upon which dogs, pigs, storks, and poultry stretch to sleep among the children, and

ponies set their forefeet to graze. One descends to this abode by an inclined plane, and when a man comes to the door he already stands beneath the level of the soil. On either side of the approach is a recess, as it may be described, flush with the outside ground, in which the housewife spins her linen and sets her babes to kick in the shade. Down below—for I have penetrated the lowest depths—is found an incredible dwelling, puddled with clay, so damp that the stranger can scarcely keep his feet; the roof is supported by rough beams embedded in the soil, and arching upwards. Darkness reigns there at midday, and with difficulty can one mark even the doors that lead to *penetralia* yet more dismal, in which, monstrous as it must appear, human creatures sleep. The walls are thick with fungi, vermin innumerable share the abode with every insect of the field. Such is the average dwelling of a Roumanian peasant. Some there are better, which have a row of windows above ground—two on each side, or even three; some there are infinitely worse, sheer "rucks" of soil and stick, through which the rain enters as through the old stork's nest on their richer neighbour's hut. This is the lining of that silken existence we see at Bucharest—and a horrid, filthy lining it is.

And yet I cannot doubt that there is money in the country—money, I mean, amongst these degraded peasants. They make no sign of it, for spangles, after all, are cheap, and the gala dresses of Roumania owe their chief beauty to spangles artistically disposed. Better evidence of wealth is found in the streets of a place like Alexandrei, far from the capital, which does not contain, so far as I have noticed, a single house of prince or boyard. But it has probably ten thousand inhabitants, of whom an immense proportion sell something. Their shops are well stocked, though in other respects just like the stalls in a Turkish bazaar—little unglazed rooms, under a colonnade. Walls, ceiling, counter, and floor are heaped with goods, and there seems to be an eager throng of peasant buyers.

Mixed with them at present are Cossacks by the hundred, from their camps on the height above and on the plain beyond. For three weeks, I learn, they have been stationed here, chafing at a delay to them incomprehensible. These reckless fellows had thought to be in Adrianople before now, but the rain is a great disposer of events upon the Danube. I do not observe that three weeks' intercourse has

established familiar relations between Cossack and townsman. The one goes his way to and fro, good-humouredly contemptuous; the other sits upon his doorstep and ignores the burly giant. I have seen Circassians helping with the children, carrying water and performing little services repaid with smiles; but I have seen no Russians thus making themselves at home. It is not, I am sure, that they lack the kindliness of heart, but they have a northern shyness which forbids them to make acquaintance easily, and perhaps a northern contempt for these helpless folk. They keep themselves apart, quietly and inoffensively, amongst a population not enthusiastic.

On leaving Alexandrei yesterday morning I had an opportunity of seeing Cossack drill, or rather, perhaps, a Cossack review. Whilst the camp above town was breaking up for a move to this place, that on the plain below was exercising the charge. A picturesque sight it was, of course, but not one satisfactory, I should think, to the general in command. Observing how admirably these wild fellows perform all kinds of duty, one is apt to forget that they are irregulars at the best, men who serve the Emperor with their horses and their swords, asking

of him only uniform, lance, and pay. A soldier who knows each force told me long ago that an equal number of Cherkess would "eat" a regiment of Cossacks. The statement appeared to me grotesque; but I held my tongue and treasured it as the opinion of a man who had experience.

Yesterday on the dusty plain outside Alexandrei, this statement, for the first time, seemed possible. The sotnias appeared simply to break up in charging, though they stopped within two hundred yards or less, and there was nothing in front of them. Each man followed his own line recklessly, and those worse mounted fell behind, those in front diverged this way and that. When I left, the officers were still trying to teach them the force of cohesion—with small success, I expect, if years of drilling have failed. Though these men be trained now to charge like a wall, upon the battlefield their old instincts will rise again; and it seems possible that the Cherkess, more desperately rash, more lithe, and more ready with their arms, might overmatch them in open fighting.

Through just such a country as that described, through just such villages, I drove all day to Turnu-Magurelli. That most important post was reached

at 4.30 p.m. It lies upon the left bank of the Oltu, nearly opposite to Islatz, upon the right bank. The Turkish position in face of it is Nicopolis, a large village or town. Although the telegraph authorities hold a different opinion, I conceive that my promise to keep silent upon military movements or positions does not apply to those of the enemy. It cannot possibly injure Russian interests to tell how the Turks are posted or what they are doing.

Nicopolis is a straggling place, so grey and brown upon the grey, brown slope, that one might easily overlook it but for the gleam of a little mosque, zinc-roofed apparently, which shines between two minarets. Very high cliffs confine the Danube hereabouts, upon its Turkish shore. Steep and naked as a white wall, they spring from a narrow strip of brushwood. From their crest the ground still rises for a distance of two miles or so, covered with crops. Nicopolis stands upon this slope, along a small valley which opens on the river opposite Flamende, or Flamunde. I could see no stream, and could find none on the map; but there must be a watercourse through the break.

Some three miles or so above the village, the Ossem upon Turkish ground, and the Oltu, in

Roumania, discharge themselves nearly opposite. This gap in the cliffs is much broader and more accessible. Turnu-Magurelli stands, as it were, *between* the two valleys, upon the other bank of course, with a mile and a half of flood before it, and the Danube beyond. The Oltu and that unruly stream, uniting their forces, have lately made a zealous effort to surround the town, and they have nearly succeeded. Had not the Russians thrown a small pontoon bridge across the Oltu, communication would be stopped with the other shore, for the road to Islatz is impracticable. The bridge upon it stands in a waste of water. Even such meadows as have escaped the flood are ankle deep in ooze, and pools of stagnant water intersect them. Strange it is to notice in such a country that mosquitoes do not show as yet.

Along the hill crest to the left of Nicopolis, commanding the two valleys I have mentioned, stands a bastioned camp, so low and dark against the sky that one cannot easily make it out. To judge by what is visible it would hold a very considerable force, but not a gun or a tent could I perceive. It is the easiest thing possible for Turks to hide their resources in men. Descending the slope in a straight

line is a covered way of masonry, communicating from the camp to a small round work of ancient form. Starting again from thence, at an obtuse angle, it runs to the top of the river cliff. Here also no sign of life whilst I examined it on several occasions.

The most important work stands slightly below the village, mounting, so far as I could make out, six heavy guns. From this battery Flamunde has been bombarded. Crowds of men were busy about it, as they were upon another fortification, unfinished, lower down the stream, overlooking the small valley opposite Flamunde. Compared with Rustchuk or Widdin, the works of Nicopolis do not seem formidable, but the Russians themselves believe they will be found much more serious than they look. They think there is a large force gathered behind the ridge, and that batteries will appear at unexpected spots. It is quite certain, however, that the fortifications of Nicopolis are at least as well known to the Russian staff as to the Turkish.

Whilst I was asleep this morning, as a man sleeps who has been riding for ten hours in Roumanian sunshine, the large battery opposite began to throw shells into Flamunde. Two gunboats took part in

the operation. At 7 a.m. the firing ceased. It cannot be called a revelation of secrets to let your readers know that pontoons and boats are collecting at Flamunde. The Turks have perceived this so clearly that they have twice bombarded the spot. I tried to send you a telegram relating the bare fact, without comment or statement of result, adding some other information carefully selected as inoffensive to Russian strategists. But bombardments are contraband of war in the telegraph office at present. After several interviews, the good-natured director consented to refer the despatch to Bucharest, upon my signing an indemnity, as it were, taking on myself the whole responsibility. And until I return thither I shall not know whether you have received the harmless intelligence which I ventured to send.

The fact is that badgered correspondents more than ever pray for a speedy passage of the river. Our situation is ridiculous, though of course we have no right to complain. Brimming with valuable intelligence, we are obliged to suppress the merest sign of it. At Giurgevo, though provided with the emphatic signature of General Skobeleff, I had great difficulty in getting my despatch away, through the

ill-will and impertinence of a fiery-faced little man in office. One is so used to receive a telegram back for alterations, excisions, and so on, that one hates to write. However, things will come round in a fortnight, I hope. Once beyond the Danube these small vexations will cease.

PLOESTI, *June* 17.

Whilst I write, at an hour which proper persons call "late," and precisians "early"—in the next day—the gipsy music is still jangling in that court-yard of my hotel which I remember to have described. Loud hum of voices, laughter, and tinkle of glass fill every pause. Ploesti has not yet thought of going to bed. Two nights of heavy rain, which kept the inhabitants at home, have whetted their appetite for dissipation. The space is crammed, and the business of Roumanian life goes on merrily.

But very different is the scene from that which I tried to picture at my last visit. Flat white caps abound, but one need not step gingerly between the tables, for few trailing swords obstruct one's passage. Civilians have come to their own again, and they seem to wear a cheerful look, to address their

partners with a conquering air, as recovering triumphant from a long series of jealous fits. Arms have surrendered to the toga at last—of all the crowd who used to gather here, clanking, glittering, staring, and laughing, scarcely a score remain, and they talk with grave earnestness among themselves, heedless of music and beauty.

The time is very close at hand. For two days past a whisper has been going round. Every child here knows what we may not telegraph, that a crisis has arrived—not the grand and final crisis probably, but a struggle in which many gallant fellows will go down. Impossible to say how the rumour spread. From one hour to another people have become suddenly aware that something is to be done. Then, upon the bustle, hurry, and excited gossip comes news that General Nepokoititscky has left this place for Alexandrei with a part of the staff. I have described Alexandrei, through which I passed four days ago. It stands "on horseback," as the French would say, across the roads to Giurgevo and Turnu-Magurelli, an enormous village rather than a town, full of small business, but quite unable to lodge the numerous Russian staff. General Nepokoititscky would not go there unless for immediate action.

And this morning at 7 a.m. a train of those young officers who used to fill the garden here departed for some point unknown even to themselves. They went towards Bucharest, and there they were to have dispersed for the grand movement.

I have called them young, but there were many grey-haired men in the crowd, not generals nor even field officers. For these, I confess, my pity was most warm. Poets and romantic persons dwell upon the fate of a young man cut off in the blossom of his years, of his sin perhaps, with infinite possibilities of love and life before him. More touching to me, beyond all comparison more pitiful, is the sight of an old man, a subaltern in a marching regiment, who goes to his death, or to a prize of which the savour and the value have been long exhausted for him. That dry and sapless captain, whose face and whose long white beard dwell in my memory—what will it profit him to earn the cross of this or that order for bravery, or to be made a field-marshal? The reward comes too late, were even the odds less heavy. The young favourite of romancists wins a prize or loses life; the old man runs as great a risk with heavier pain of body, and his prize, if he win it, is discounted into nothing. "A good soft pillow,"

as said King Harry, is meetest for "white heads." Those may pity the young hero who will, but I reserve my softer feeling for the old, who have shot their bolt and missed fortune, but have still to run the weary risk again. Of such there are too many in all armies, but I am peculiarly struck with their fate here, knowing to what awful certainties of peril they advance.

So much is certain, that the movement in prospect cannot be paralleled by anything of the sort in other wars. The Danube itself is an uncomfortable foe—more mobile than a Court beauty, strong and fierce as the sea. An army cannot cross such a river where it likes. It needs a road to the crossing place, and another beyond. I have just been told, by a high official of the railway here, that ten thousand carriages have been, or are to be, passed through the country, belonging to superior officers. The immense train of baggage following the Russian army has already caused astonishment among those foreign soldiers who look on. It cannot traverse the savage plains of Bulgaria without roads, nor can it hope to make progress without some assistance from the population on its route. But wherever a practicable road opens on the Danube, there stands the

Turk in force, and every Russian knows now that he will fight not unskilfully.

I begin to feel—rather than to see or hear—that the unthinking confidence formerly prevalent is failing. Although not an officer has so much as suggested the possibility of repulse when the struggle comes, I think there are many, and those of course the best informed, who begin vaguely to conceive an idea that the first effort may not succeed. I do not mean that any one is discouraged; discouragement is not a feeling to which men so easy and volatile are prone. But they see more clearly now those difficulties and dangers which were conspicuous to outside critics at the beginning. When I first came here there was no more doubt of a glorious march on Constantinople than there was amongst Parisians of a triumphal promenade to Berlin in 1870. The army had been assembled many months, and even twenty thousand men feel an unreasoning confidence in themselves when they can see and count their number. Much more did the legions of the Czar mutually and unconsciously persuade each other that such a host must be irresistible. Wearying marches, reflection, and rumours from the front have now, to some extent, disturbed this overweening pride. It is

generally understood that there are legions on the other side also, and a great river to cross under every difficulty. The Russians are not disheartened in the least—their courage is too real to be shaken by fanciful dangers; but they at length perceive that terrible work lies before them.

Whatever may come of the war, I conceive that the Roumanian people will be ruined utterly, perhaps eternally. In this age of the world it is too late to recover lost ground. A Roumanian boasts his unequalled corn fields, his enormous reserve of crown lands, probably one-third of the whole area, his forests, and his mines. In these he trusts, and calculates that by the sale of a mere fraction he can pay the forty millions sterling of his debt. But a man cannot live upon wood and coals and minerals, even though they be uncoined gold. The value of a forest or a mine lies in its use, and if Roumania in twenty peaceful years have not been able to turn her treasures to account, how shall she do so when credit and cash are gone, when paper unconvertible is her money, and when time, more valuable than all else, has thrown her back in the race of nations? She never "held her own" in her best day, and that is past. Next year corn will be short, both quantity

and quality, and Roumania will be scarce quoted in Mark Lane. Traders who used to deal here will seek other markets, farther off in distance, but able to undersell Roumanian farmers, because they will employ the time and money wasted here in perfecting their crops.

As for the mines and forests, they have never yet been used, since a score of countries can supply the world more cheaply, more certainly, if not better. Coal has no value unless it be employed; and Roumania, which makes no use herself of the stores with which Heaven has provided her, could not put a ton upon the European market at a price with which Borneo itself could not compete. In short, I conceive that this country, having missed its chance in years gone by, is now doomed to fall further and further behind. There will always be enough and to spare for her people to eat, but from the rivalry of national wealth she may henceforth step aside. She will be no longer "in the race." Those who know may say how far the same arguments apply to Russia; I myself think that with some slight exceptions they are true of the last as of the first.

Readers may be amused to hear that the soup plate furnished to correspondents has been abolished.

Such universal laughter arose at sight of it that the authorities took counsel. A gentleman—not English—who felt great pride apparently in his distinction, and wore it on every occasion, settled the matter finally. Two Russian generals, at the Ploesti station, came to high words over the luckless man, each claiming to have engaged him for the transport of his luggage. This little tale, humorously put before the Grand Duke's staff, produced its effect, in shouts of laughter first, and secondly in an order for the immediate substitution of another badge. Our new *brassard* is rather pretty—a band of silk in Russian colours, with the necessary writing embroidered on it. The worst of this change is that it delays our departure terribly. Embroidery is a long business, and as we ourselves have to provide the badge and take it in person for the stamp, we have first to wait for it and then to make a journey hither. This is the more annoying since it befalls just at the moment when things are evidently working to a crisis. Russian officials have now occupied the post and telegraph bureaux at Bucharest, and to get news of interest away is impossible. In the field we might, at least, see something, if not very great events as yet; but the whole army of correspon-

dents is detained by this sudden edict, and by another which exacts that permission for each horse or servant shall be personally applied for, instead of by letter, as was announced.

ALEXANDREI, *June* 25.

On the very early morning of Friday a brigade of Russians crossed the Danube below Ibraila, and a smaller force at Galatz. At the former point a bridge had been building for some days past—of tressels upon the flooded shore, and of rafts in mid stream; at the latter the crossing was made in boats. Neither at Ibraila nor at Galatz are the "grand operations" to be looked for, though the Emperor went up to see. A battery right and left of Machin tried to defend the Turkish shore, but they were speedily silenced, not, however, before inflicting very heavy losses. A pause ensued, but afterwards, later in the day, very heavy firing was heard inland, and another convoy of wounded reached the bridge towards afternoon. At Galatz, whither the Emperor proceeded after observing the success of his army at Ibraila, there was much more severe resistance. But one after another the Turkish positions were

carried with the bayonet, and the defenders fled beyond Tulcha, as one enthusiast informs me—a distance of fifty miles or so.

Before this disaster the Turks had anticipated it. They had begun twenty-four hours earlier to tear up the roads and destroy the country behind Machin. According to one account but six hundred Bashi-Bazouks, a forlorn hope, defended the river at this point. Machin itself is said to have been evacuated, and the firing heard afterwards may probably have been that of an engagement between the Russian advance and the retiring garrison. It has long been known that the Turks would not seriously defend the extreme north of the Dobrudscha. They had warned the inhabitants of Tulcha and other places long ago that military needs might compel them to burn those towns. There was a report in Bucharest on Friday, coming from Tchernavoda, that even the railway between that place and Kustendjie was doomed. The Turks know quite well in which direction they are seriously threatened, and where the attack, however formidable, is not most pressing.

In this large and busy village the Russians abound like ants. Great camps surround it; the hillsides, as the streets, are whitened over with

them. Every house has its group of officers, who are glad sometimes to get a bed in the stable. Extreme order prevails, nevertheless. By nine at night the streets are actually empty; by ten the coffee-houses and restaurants are closed, and the Roumanian police come into view again. Through the hours of daylight they disappear, crowded out of notice by the burly white-coated strangers, who survey all things Roumanian with good-natured contempt. General Nepokoititscky, chief of the staff, is here, and the rest of the Quartier-Général sets out from Ploesti on Tuesday.

The reader will, I feel sure, be willing to admit that I have given to the invading army every credit that it deserves, and have even granted somewhat upon trust. What is noticeable in this *levée* of the Russian people, above all other points that strike one, is extreme good-nature. From archdukes and field-marshals downward, each in his own degree is apparently a "good fellow," kindly, sympathetic, quick to understand and to catch a tone. Exceptions there are, of course. But because I have said so much again and again, I feel bound to mention the belief of others, far more experienced on this point, who declare that

these qualities, though not "put on," are only skin-deep—that the Oriental recklessness of human life and suffering lies engrained among the pleasant and courteous gentlemen whose manners have so charmed the stranger. In witness thereof have been put forward various events and stories, more or less historical.

I do not conceive it my business to estimate the Russian character in former times, nor even at home in our own day. Reserving my personal opinion, I should decline to repeat evidence which can be but hearsay to me, though tendered by eye-witnesses. But having told the good, I must tell the bad also, when one, as the other, is brought actually before me. Riding yesterday—where and on what road I shall not tell—I stayed at a wine-shop to rest. Presently came in two young soldiers, wearied out, quite penniless, but cheerful. They bowed to me, and sat upon the bench with the air of men too tired to unharness, too feverish to sleep. I sent them a glass of wine each, and began to talk through my interpreter. He stated to me that they were peasants from the neighbourhood of Moscow, but brighter youths could not be easily found in the *bourgeois* class of Eastern Europe. They had not

much to say even when rested, besides laughingly displaying the bread allotted them, which was like a captain's biscuit made of oak sawdust. They observed carelessly that the regulations gave them a pound of meat every three days; "but," it was added, "somebody else eats it. We do not see any from week to week."

I asked what provisions they would receive at the end of their day's journey, and they marked off upon their fingers about three square inches to represent the ration of bread. I remember to have sent some weeks since the scale of subsistence to which a Russian soldier is entitled. Prince Charles has declared himself astonished at the voracity of his subjects judged by the comparison. But if I must believe these young soldiers, their abstinence begins to equal that of the famous horse in training to live upon a straw a day. Very cheerful and manly they were, however, taking with gratitude, but without the least servility, such small refreshment as I could find for them at the inn. They could afford nothing themselves, receiving but one rouble a month—about three shillings and twopence—gone long ago. I asked how the health account stood in their regiment, and they answered significantly that many

were ill but few in hospital. Then the fairer and younger fellow, smiling rather painfully, added, "The doctors were fooled yesterday; one of our company died, and they carried him to the hospital. The doctor came out with his whip and declared he was not dead, so he cut him, of course, over the legs, making great stripes. But the poor chap was really gone, so everybody laughed at the doctor."

I said, through my interpreter, that the joke was not a bad one, but that they should be careful in talking thus to strangers. "Some might believe you serious," I added. "It is serious, as God knows," they both answered: "the doctors always flog a man before letting him into hospital, and many times he will die under the whip." As they spoke, a melancholy wretch tottered round the corner of the inn. His face was waxy and bloodless, his eyes swollen, his white shirt clung to him as though soaked with rain. He dropped upon the bench, letting his rifle fall. "Surely this object is not being sent to duty?" I exclaimed in horror. "It is only his feet amiss," the others answered, more in disgust, I thought, than pity. "He prefers to go on"—rather than ask the tender mercy of the hospital, I suppose.

The poor wretch beginning to unwrap his wounded feet, I mounted in haste and fled. The account these fellows gave when alone with a foreigner who treated them kindly I feel bound to repeat. If it be not true, I dare vouch that they believed what they told. It seemed to me that they wished to discover the opinion of a stranger about it: that they have so far progressed beyond their fathers' standpoint as to begin to wonder faintly if all doctors behave as they accuse their own of doing. Readers will quite understand that I have myself beheld no instances of such inhumanity; I have as yet had no occasion to visit hospitals, or to see the working of the medical staff. But you may rely on this, that the two soldiers were not joking, nor even inventing imaginary horrors, and therefore I consider myself bound to send their report, as one that may be false, but is at least believed by those who have a vital interest in the matter. Should I find the opportunity, which I shall diligently seek, and convince myself that these ugly stories are a mere tradition of the ranks lingering from an earlier and more brutal time, I shall hasten to console your readers with that assurance.

TURNU-MAGURELLI, *June* 27.

Put the matter how you please, explain it by Radical logic and justify it upon the purest principles of Christian charity, it will none the less seem a hard thing to these ignorant souls of Turnu-Magurelli and Nicopolis that their houses should be burnt and their own lives made miserable because two foreign Powers go to war. To me myself, with all the advantages I have gained by study of lessons in atrocities, it seems a punishment almost too serious for their geographical error. The manifest designs of Providence must be accomplished doubtless, as interpreted by prophets below the gangway, but feebler natures may be allowed the futile solace of pity.

Those ruthless seers will aver that Turnu-Magurellians have no just cause of complaint, since their country stands at war with Turkey; and Nicopolitans still less, since they partake of the abominable thing. The proverbial cruelty of good people was never shown so painfully as in this contest. I sit writing at my window, which looks on a street deserted of its natural occupants and industries. I see no grown girl pass from hour to hour, no woman or child even, except the very

poorest. The men hang about in groups, striding from one to another, with an expression on their faces which I have learned to recognise—the expression of those who wait an inevitable danger. The road is blocked with country waggons, pressed —upon payment, it is true, but taken by force—into a stranger's service. Every house, and almost every room, is occupied by these same strangers. They gallop through the standing corn, they root out the growing crops, and set their batteries there. And in a day, an hour, at any minute, these batteries will provoke the foe, and the end of all misfortunes will arrive when Turnu-Magurelli is destroyed with all its grievances together.

This is quite as it should be, some persons tell us, because, in the first place, certain Moslem Bulgarians outraged and murdered their Christian kinsfolk; and, in the second place, because Roumania has declared war with Turkey. But she had not so much as a demonstrable grievance against her Suzerain until Russia forced one on her. These very folk of Turnu-Magurelli lived on a better footing with their neighbours across the Danube than they do with the uninvited liberator. Good people are cruel, I think, when they have not

much imagination, and are wholly possessed with one idea at a time. If the bitterest persecutor of the Turk could see this place for a little while he would probably regret that theological hatred should have carried him so far against the "Unspeakable" —an epithet for which lovers of grotesque barbarism will be ever grateful; a word more charmingly incorrect, ridiculous, and illogical was never devised.

Leaving the sentiment of the situation to those who have time for it, I may state that the bombardment of Nicopolis having begun we are anxiously expecting a return compliment thence. Telegrams are utterly forbidden, under any circumstances, from one private individual to another. It is scarcely doubtful either that letters run a risk.

At four o'clock on Monday the trial bombardment was essayed. Four Russian batteries opened fire, one at Flamende, one at the Oltu mouth, and two at the extreme wooded edge of the Danube betwixt those points. Bombardment was never more prosaic or more void of incident. In the parched plains of Roumania, earthworks, however ugly, however formidable, scarcely show upon the grey, burnt grass. Were it not for the Russian sentries,

gleaming white in the sun, who stand defiantly upon the parapet, an inexperienced eye would not easily make out even the great Flamende batteries when the big swirl of smoke had cleared from the gun last fired. As for those along the Danube, they are represented only by a white puff, suddenly shooting up and rounding above the trees, and a dull thud following.

Opposite this shore, to which even a bombardment cannot give interest, rise the grand Turkish cliffs, full of colour. Above the stream they stand like a wall, white at top, but mottling gradually into olive green, where they are hid behind the narrow strip of trees edging the river. In that strip the Turks have batteries, no doubt, as have the Russians on this side. One showed itself, indeed, yesterday afternoon; but their great works stand above, on steep "downs" rising over the cliffs. Yesterday they remained obstinately silent, but this afternoon four have replied. In the midst of the engagement one of the monitors steamed out and slowly passed before the Russian batteries. They fired, but did not hit, and she took up a station by Fontarabia, two or three miles up stream. Thence, no doubt, the commander thinks he can

more effectually swoop upon the bridge when it is begun. Russian sailors, however, believe they have hemmed the vessel in with torpedoes, so that at her first movement from anchorage she will go to the bottom. She fired, I think, a shot or two this afternoon at the batteries by the Oltu. The Turks are not shelling this town, but, in reply to a Russian shot which, by accident, I believe, entered Nicopolis, they dropped two bombs amongst the crowd of officers and idlers watching on the Islas road. We scattered rapidly without hurt.

When the hurly-burly began to-day, all the artillery of four *corps d'armée* were firing across the Danube between this place and Giurgevo. My news from the latter town is exciting. A heavy cannonade from Rustchuk has compelled the remaining inhabitants to leave, with the loss of three or four lives. Russian police going round turned every one out into the country. The misfortunes of Giurgevo, also, are quite correct, and indeed sanctified, since they are incurred through the righteous vengeance of the Russ upon the Unspeakable. Our turn will quickly arrive for expulsion.

To-day, at dawn, the cannonade was far more vigorous on both sides. The Flamende batteries are

rather quiet, but when they do fire they roar. Some guns of enormous calibre must be in position there. Upon the Turkish shore I have observed no reply from the small battery that was making rather futile answer yesterday. Upon the other flank of the position Russ and Turk are engaged with almost equal spirit. From the bastioned camp which I described, the latter are firing very large guns, and from a wicked little earthwork now for the first time visible, high up the hillside, they sustain a quick and dangerous repartee with the other batteries. To-day, in fact, the discharges may be called incessant. Though but two more shells have fallen, without doing mischief, in the town, people are getting very frightened. They no longer dare to hang about the *chaussée* leading to Islas, fishing tranquilly whilst they observe the fine panorama of the tragedy. Such as venture to the spot lie cautiously upon their stomachs, and meekly suffer more adventurous persons to stand over them astride. Those unable to resist the fascination of the sight, yet unwilling to grovel in the dust, find a curious sense of safety among the shrubs of the public garden. An acacia-bush is inefficient to protect one against Whitworth shells, but it seems

an instinct of human nature to hide one's body behind something, anything, when missiles fly around. The report of casualties yesterday, as it is given me, shows two soldiers killed and six wounded only. Several guns, however, were dismounted in the Oltu batteries.

Whilst I was writing the above lines word came to me that the town was blazing. Such an announcement seems to strike one even the more suddenly if one has been expecting it. I ran out, after ordering my goods to be packed at once, and saw all the townsfolk hastening with excited cries towards the Danube. Not Turnu-Magurelli, but Nicopolis, was burning. All the low suburb on the river bank lay hid in smoke already. I hope that this disaster was inflicted on the poor Turkish peasants accidentally. The stronger batteries raised by their engineers are so near the town that a trifling deviation would lodge therein a shell aimed at the hostile earthworks from this side. Whether it was a mistake or no, the great guns at Flamende ponderously repeated it several times whilst I stood to watch, and fire sprang in new places. Meanwhile the Russian batteries increased their activity, spreading from the Oltu mouth to a point several miles

higher. The Turks also extended their line—or rather unmasked two fresh batteries—which corresponded with those of the enemy. Two bastions of the citadel took part, with guns of large calibre, and puffs of smoke arose in unexpected places.

But towards eleven o'clock their fire slackened, and then ceased. They have taken no revenge as yet for the burning of their town, and Russians naturally conclude that they have not done so because they cannot, because their cannon are dismounted, or their men dismayed, or their works damaged beyond present service. So far as my poor opinion goes, I should be inclined to say that the Turks have ceased rather for economy, and from the knowledge that their resources will be needed elsewhere shortly, than from any other motive. The Russian fire did not strike me as wonderful, so far as I could see it, but it is much better than some enthusiastic Russophobes have represented. At this time of writing I hear about two shots a minute from this side, and no response. About four o'clock the serenade will become much livelier, and at nine, so it is whispered to me, the storm so long preparing will break loose; where, I must not hint even now. I send this by a man picked up in the street, who is desperately

anxious to be out of Turnu-Magurelli before the avenging Turks reduce it to the condition of the Dead Sea cities. I have taken what guarantees I can, and, my best accomplished, I repose in helpless trust upon destiny.

FOUR P.M.

My trust in destiny has not been met in a kindly spirit. As if to mock such innocent confidence, the dwelling in which I found refuge took fire shortly after I had written the lines above. It was a licensed victualler's, full of spirits and turpentine and oil—some substances at least which explode. I had just returned from a visit to the scene of action, and was leisurely noting my impressions, when an agonised courier rushed into the den crying, "Fire, sir, fire! I go save horses!" The breathless thump of heavy guns—if I may coin expressions to describe a sound not yet properly represented, I think—had been in my ear for days. I had just been watching Nicopolis, in its shroud of smoke. What could a man suppose when thus alarmed by a cry of "Fire!" save that the Turk had begun reprisals?

The room, if I may call it so, was filled with smoke

on the instant, and I could but dimly see my people, aided by Cossack volunteers, struggling with a mob of plunging horses. Then, whilst I threw together my most necessary goods scattered about the room, suddenly the house shook, the roof appeared to lift, and lurid darkness swooped down. I ran with what I had collected, to find the street full of people screaming and hurrying towards the suburb. Another explosion made the building quiver before I escaped. My horses had all bolted into the very Danube—this is literal—my waggon seemed probably to be blazing, and my personal effects also. Having grasped this situation when the first shock was past, I decided death preferable to such ridiculous dishonour, and ran back to my den. A few journeys brought everything out, except a box of sardines. My courier dragged forth the carriage all by himself, and before the flames had reached the street, or the people had done screaming, we were able to concentrate all our energies upon the missing steeds. So ended the adventure as far as I am concerned, but all the block is flaring now like a small Nicopolis. It will doubtless reach Bucharest that Turnu-Magurelli has been burnt by the ferocious Moslem. I can assure you that he was not more concerned in the affair than

was Sir Wilfrid Lawson. Drink and tobacco ruined my host, who had hitherto lived on them—a lighted cigar falling against a leaky cask of spirits having called the garrison to arms, brought a score of princes to the spot, frightened the town into fits, and nearly beggared your Special Correspondent.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE TURKISH SIDE.

SIMNITZA, *July* 3.

I AM not sure that high military chiefs in Russia are quite delighted with the manner of this army's advance. If, upon the one hand, its progress has been unimpeded, upon the other it has been slow. I should not hold myself justified in repeating to your readers one amongst the stories current here about this general or that—this movement which did not result as expected, or the other which stuck fast by reason of deficiencies. I have no means of verifying camp scandal, but my judgment, based only on what I have witnessed, is that Russians have no cause to be dissatisfied with their war machine as a whole.

At the same time, there are obvious facts to prove that all has not gone as the supreme commanders expected. Certain high officers, for one reason or another, have not conducted their operations to the

satisfaction of their chief. Several have been superseded, others sent to less important posts. The commander of an army corps was rebuked only to-day, and in his condemnation the whole staff was included. I could not tell, if I would, and I would not if I knew, the specific mistakes which these gentlemen have committed. In a general sense, I understand that they have not shown such intelligence or activity as was looked for. Some officers have been decorated, and some blamed: and the man would make an immense error who drew conclusions too broad from one fact or the other. How the Russian army would have fared against a European foe in this case is still a matter for argument, but for the purpose it has in hand much worse tools would have sufficed.

The *raison d'être* of the Turks on this side the Hellespont lay in their power to keep what their forefathers won. They themselves are said to regard their place in Europe as a camp, to be perpetually defended; it now seems that they cannot even justify their position on these terms. They can fight, indeed, with personal bravery, but they are capable neither of strategic combinations nor of that self-devotion which risks life at every hazard for a

great result. That the army should have forced a passage here, through the negligence of the sentries, is already a fault inexcusable; but that the garrisons of Nicopolis and Rustchuk, with two ironclads at one spot and five at the other, should permit the Russians to build their bridge and pass without an effort at interference is still more conclusive of degeneracy. I have it from high authority that for thirty-six hours after the battle the invaders might have been thrust back by a spirited assault. At any moment since, the monitors might have steamed up or down and knocked the bridge to atoms with a single shot. That they can run the fire of the Russian batteries has been already proved, but they are kept at anchor by the chain of torpedoes dropped round them. The example of the enemy himself might have shown them how devoted sailors will risk almost certain death for a great advantage. The smallest monitor that escaped would be enough to stop the invasion even now. But they lie quietly at anchor, just as sentries go to sleep at their post, as generals potter and gossip, as private individuals cry to Allah instead of looking that their powder be dry.

Our bridge has been built midway between Rustchuk and Nicopolis, the two strongest positions

on the Danube. It is said that part of the army has withdrawn from the latter to the former fortress, but two monitors remain there, and a garrison of strength unknown. At Rustchuk there are not less than twenty thousand men, probably more, and five gunboats of one sort or another. The enemy's forces are concentrating at Tirnova, directly in front of us, for a battle. Under such circumstances it is evidently impossible to advance before clearing our flanks, or leaving a corps at least to protect the bridge and our line of communications.

There are now three *corps d'armée* on the other side—the 8th, 12th, and 9th. They do not pass through Sistova, but leave it on the right, marching down the Danube along the cliffs. We hear nothing of the camp at Shumla, so much talked of; but the intelligence department of the army does not appear to be very active. The Grand Duke, so rumour says, is dissatisfied with the reports furnished him. I know that he sent out a special officer, with five Cossacks, on Sunday, to push as far as he could go. I met him on the bridge as he returned from this mission with his report. Not without some trouble, and much danger, had he escaped two hundred Bashi-Bazouks, near Tirnova.

The cavalry division is now split up into brigades and half-brigades, the command of which has been distributed amongst the generals and colonels of the staff. Prince Manveloff, who commanded at Turnu-Magurelli, and General Skobeleff, who commanded at Giurgevo, have both lost their positions—without the least disgrace, be it understood. All this force of cavalry has already passed, and this morning Simnitza is almost deserted. The *corps d'armée* that will follow are to pass due south to Tirnova. Nicopolis and Rustchuk both lie at two posts' distance, forty kilometres, from this. The former place has begun bombarding Turnu in earnest. Two houses had been burnt and two civilians killed by yesterday morning—of course the population have left and are camping out.

The bridge was definitely finished yesterday, and a creditable piece of work it is so far as it goes. But the breadth is absurd and the approaches are ridiculous. One rides down the cliffs on this side with the saddle on one's horse's neck, and I have heard of no one, except the Emperor, who climbed the Turkish road opposite on horseback. These things will be remedied; but unless they build another bridge for the return traffic, there will be

heart-breaking work for the intendance. It is announced to-day that alternate hours will be given to vehicles bound for either side. Yesterday the Czar paid a visit to Sistova, but on coming back it was simply impossible for his carriage to cross. He left it there, and took a boat. Riding up about that time, I met his Majesty, driving with the Grand Duke and the Czarewitch. He has certainly improved in health and spirits, as well he might after this first signal triumph.

Going on to the bridge I found it simply a "block," such as one sees in London just now. Three batteries of artillery were filing over the marsh behind me, and after them, as was known, came a whole brigade of cavalry. Desperate efforts were being made to force a heavy train of stores across before these arrived. But besides the mere want of room, all the soldiers and officers encamped upon the marsh who could get away had mustered at the bridge-head to see their Czar. Tents are crowded right up to the bank, and amongst these seethed some thousand idlers, some hundreds of waggons struggling for precedence, a stray sotnia of Cossacks, and a miscellaneous crowd breaking in from every gap in the line of tents. I am

bound to say, however, that the officers in charge did not lose their heads at all. General Zumbaieff, the commandant, a grand old soldier, found time for a quarter of an hour's chat with me in the roadway, though my horse was actually squeezed by soldiers forced aside by the waggons passing. Other officers joined the conversation leisurely, and one might have been gossiping in Pall Mall for any attention paid to the doings round us. The self-helpfulness of Russians is striking. They do their work in their own way, and nobody interferes unless wanted. I could imagine a French general blowing out his brains in such a scene as that, after consigning the whole waggon-train to the provost-marshal.

But as I rode back, without attempting to reach Sistova again, I came across the cavalry brigade waiting to pass the largest bridge of the marsh series —I have already explained that arms and pools of stagnant water intercept one's course to the Danube. Artillery was passing, and I dismounted to wait, in company with some scores of officers. Presently, whilst the endless waggons filed across, arrived a squadron of Circassians, whose lances, painted scarlet, told them as belonging to the escort of the Czar.

Then officers of every grade, every uniform, came trotting up, and joined our company. Things looked ill for any one pressed as to time. A black mass on the further shore stood the cavalry brigade, dismounted, and it wound backwards until hid in the dust-storm always raging here. Upon the other side of the bridge-head a miscellaneous crowd of waggons, infantry, stray Cossacks by the hundred, hospital trains, mounted officers, and I know not what else, loomed dimly through the brown haze.

There was nothing for it but to wait. Brilliant young aides-de-camp, fuming with impatience, threw themselves upon the ground. I saw a stately general beg a drink of water from the soldiers fishing, and empty the unwashed *bidon* of its foul contents—certainly, of all liquids that misfortune compels a man to drink, Danube water is the dirtiest. Before I had waited half an hour there were perhaps a thousand horses clustered round the sentries, who displayed that stolid faithfulness so admirable in their position. Princes covered with decorations like a breastplate tried to force a way across, but were ruthlessly and irreverently prevented. In course of time the artillery waggons passed, then a long convoy of stores, and then, at last, the cavalry

began to move. It seemed an endless procession. Cossacks in blue with a red stripe; Cossacks without a stripe; red Circassians, buff, black, yellow-banded Circassians—nay, even one in purple silk;* red hussars, brown hussars with red breeches, blue with mauve breeches, blue with red breeches, all blue with yellow facings, blue coats with brown breeches, stained apparently by long travel, green coats and blue breeches, green and red breeches, all green with yellow facings—merely to watch the procession made one dizzy. Then the artillery of the brigade followed; then more and more waggons, until at length a superb Circassian, swinging his long black coat defiantly, and tossing his silver accoutrements to one side, crushed past the sentries and energetically put our case before the officials on the other bank. The train was stopped presently and we all passed over, saving the patient fishermen who lined the shore and never looked up whoever passed. But it was a two hours' wait. How are the communications of a great army to be carried out in this fashion?

* Ignorance was excusable then, but the correspondent who did not know, within a month from this, the famous Turcoman who waited upon the redoubtable Skobeleff, proved himself unfit for his position.

SISTOVA, *July* 5.

Every one agrees that all war must cease before long. Various reasons have been put forward for this confidence. Some say that the immense expense will deter nations from fighting, some that the progress of true Christianity will effect a change, and others trust to common sense. Colonel Doctouroff, of Servian fame, told me some days ago that the machine of war is getting too big and too complicated for the human mind to control, and that quarrels must cease on this account. If I may suggest another reason for the comforting belief, I should say that as peoples grow more civilised the dirtiness of the thing will become unbearable to their greater refinement.

What characterises an army in the field above everything else is dirt. One is clothed in it, one eats it, drinks it, smells it. Officers who once were doubtless brilliant as butterflies, in uniform spotless as the lily of the field, become draggled, stained, and rusty. Their coats have holes, their boots are patched. As for the soldiers, they are simply filthy. You will meet them more ragged than the poorest Irish labourer, and those who were once snowy white of vesture have fallen to the lowest depth of

blackness. As for some further details of the sort which I must not dwell on, a hint should suffice—everybody cuts his hair as short as scissors will do it before entering on a campaign.

A moment arrives, after no long time, when soldier-servants give up washing in despair, and accept all the dirt that comes to them. Then they cease to observe whether their masters' things are clean or no, despise the humble duty of washing cups and plates and forks, ignore the use of soap, and all that civilisation has laboriously impressed upon the menial instinct. They return to the customs of primeval man, and we follow of necessity. Thus forks and spoons are ignored at an early stage, plates and dishes somewhat later.

At this very moment a grimy wretch, upon whose hands one might plant mustard-seed with reasonable hope, is employed beside me in cutting up sugar. He has brought forth a snowy lump and a butcher's knife, and upon the bare earth is hacking off chips. These he collects and ranges in a greasy tin box, popping each alternate lump into the black cavern of his mouth. All is done with the foul fingers, upon the native soil, between whiffs of tobacco; and no one protests—the greater number do not even

observe such things now. We are all so conscious of dirt, so resigned and hopeless about it, that a little more or less is not worth disputing. I shall not linger upon this theme. Let readers turn up the passage of 'London Labour and London Poor' in which the dens of St. Giles are described, and the way of life in that quarter. The manners and customs pictured there are not so filthy as those we necessarily adopt. This army is but little worse than others. War itself is foul. There are more wounded die of dirt than of lead or iron.

I am resting a day here to repair my waggon, and to nurse the bruises received by a fall. My horse fell with me headlong yesterday, and I turned a summersault as lightly as in the days when fourteen stone would have seemed a grotesque and impossible weight for the human frame. The dust which we anathematise so often saved my neck, and also my right hand, upon which the horse trod without injuring it, as he struggled to his feet. Grateful should I be, therefore, that in truth the dust is something monstrous and incredible. One cannot see a yard through it, and driving is really dangerous upon these unmade roads. Cavalry on the march can only see the crupper of the horse in

front. If one climb a height, and look down upon the endless columns filing past, the infantry will be shut out of sight for fifty yards together by the dust, the cavalry invisible from the waist downwards. A strange effect this has, seen from above, but in the column itself men suffer dreadfully. After many days of it I should conceive that lung diseases will be common: Russians are said to be specially subject to them at all times.

There is something that impresses one peculiarly in watching a regiment of Cossacks come through this cloud. First one hears a wild chant of many voices, then a single voice takes up the strain, in Eastern falsetto, and then the chorus bursts out once more with its barbaric harmony. The pæan sounds clearer and clearer, until, dim through the curtain of yellow dust, the first ranks appear, not ten feet from you. The singers go in front, and it is well they do, for otherwise there would be a heavy bill for folks run over every day. Cossack equipments never rattle, their horses do not neigh, the men speak seldom on the march. In such dust their horses' hoofs fall unheard. When its singers have passed beyond earshot, a sotnia jogs by without creak or jingle; there are singers, however, to

each sotnia, and the war-chant never quite dies away.

The inhabitants of Sistova have not returned, though urged to do so by their cadi. To this fine old gentleman I paid a visit last night, and found him seated, in orthodox fashion, upon a carpet in the courtyard. A tiny little girl sat with him whose great black eyes opened very wide, though she quite retained her Oriental self-possession. The cadi has a white intellectual face and a winning manner. His determination and conscientiousness were displayed in the resolve to stop here at any risk and await the event. He tried to convince his co-religionists that their duty was to stay, but when he failed with every single one his own courage was not shaken. A brother, a servant, and three ladies stood by him, and remained alone in Sistova. They were plundered—I dare not ask by whom—but not hurt. And the Russians naturally treat them with the greatest consideration, so that their prisoner observes, with fine dignity, that every Christian appears to be a friend.

He has sent various messages to the fugitive population representing that they will be kindly treated if they come back, but without any result. They

seem to have dispersed; and since many left this place without any means at all, or the prospect of any, it seems probable that they cannot return if they would. The people of Tirnova have gone, and of all the villages about. Helpless crowds of refugees must be wandering about the country, starving.

But although this is a painful state of things, I cannot feel certain that the Turks would all have been treated like the cadi had they stayed here. A single man may very well pass without danger where three thousand would not get through. And the cadi himself was plundered of everything. There are too many evidences of wanton mischief, of things destroyed for the sake of destruction. In the handsome Turkish dwelling which I have appropriated, carved wooden bars are wrenched out of every window, frames dragged from their hinges, shelves torn down, the picturesque cupboards which line each chamber like a wainscot are hacked. What furniture remains is lying in fragments.

Needless to say that no pane of glass is left, since none could be found in the whole quarter. House after house have I entered, but never have seen one in which every bit of glass had not been smashed. Turks use a great deal of glass when they can afford

it. I am writing in a broad verandah, scrupulously clean and well built, which looks across the courtyard towards Simnitz and the Danube. I could fancy it really delightful when the curtains were hanging on rollers that remain between the pillars, and the bare, broad divan was covered with silk cushions. That there were children here I know, for in one of the desecrated cupboards I have found their Turkish equivalent for our copy-books and "summing." But all is gone now, curtains and cushions, and those who rejoiced therein. They are wandering Heaven knows where, and the moral is too much worn for further use.

What I was going to observe relates to such prosaic things as windows. Two pretty rooms open on my verandah, each of which has ten sashes, containing three large panes apiece. In the back rooms I count fourteen sashes altogether, and there is not a morsel of glass six inches square remaining. So it is through the town, and this, I contend, is wanton mischief, whoever did it. If the Turks had been here when such work was going on I am afraid they would have been in danger.* Pray understand,

* It afterwards leaked out that an indefinite number of Turks were murdered.

without more repetition, that nothing is left entire in any house through the bazaar, or through that section which was called Turkish. Even the stoves are broken into, every one, every mattress ripped up, the smallest bit of wainscot torn away. And remark, that many of these houses and shops have the cross chalked upon their fronts, for evidence, if evidence could be needed, that not three-fourths of the plundered town was inhabited by Mussulmans.

My horses are waiting to take me forward; but before closing this I must again point out the difference between this shore and the other. Here is food and drink in abundance, of quality really good, eating-houses and *cafés*, where one is served dishes palatable if rough, excellent water from wells, whole streets of houses comfortable, well built, and, above all, scrupulously clean. Observe that I speak not of the Bulgarian quarter but of the Turkish, of which the innermost *penetralia* are but too visible.

This is no large town. If somewhat bigger than Simnitz, it does not compare with Turnu-Magurelli. But what a difference! All that comes from Europe one finds more easily in Roumania, of course; but evidence of refinement and self-respect is to be sought

among the Turks. The most scrupulous housewife in England could not but express admiration for the cleanliness of their dwellings. So snowy is the woodwork of door and sash and ceiling that one would think each house had been built last month. The whitewashed walls have not a stain upon them, unless it be the mark where some plunderer has smashed a box. The floors of kneaded clay are perfectly smooth, the locks fit, the gardens, such as they are, have been well tended. I have no prejudices on one side or the other in this quarrel, nor is it my business to do more than state the case. If I believed of the Turks all that has been said of them I should still be forced to admit that they lived in Sistova more decently and more comfortably by far than their free neighbours across the Danube, and, what strikes one forcibly, that the oppressed Bulgarian enjoyed such luxuries as food and wine in plenty, drinkable water, and whole raiment, whilst the Roumanian opposite was living like a starved mole, half his time underground. These things are not questions to be argued over, but facts visible, explain them how one may. And the Bulgar perhaps has a suspicion that his affairs may not improve under the new *régime*. The Russian

officers admit with surprise and bitterness that the population does not welcome them with frenzied joy.

CAREVICA, 10 A.M.

Decidedly one is better in Turkish land. An hour's trot over a road not offensively dusty, and more smooth than we see in Roumania, has brought me to this spot, where I am waiting the passage of the Grand Duke. He is expected to stay the night here, going on to Batak at early morning. Things are perfectly quiet all along this line, and no movement of importance can be looked for during two or three days. If campaigning were always as pleasant as to-day's work, with the excitement of a battle from day to day, it would be too much delight for sinful man. Caravica is a Bulgarian village, with a pond of stagnant water in the midst, filled with the drainage of high, bare slopes all round. Its houses are built of mud, are thatched with brown reeds, and stand in little weed-grown compounds, littered with rubbish. I know no more of them, nor wish.

Beyond the village is a system of water-courses, cutting and inter-crossing, useful for I know not what purpose besides giving life to a willow copse.

Finer trees you will not see, nor ground more charmingly broken. Generals and other magnates are quartered in those brown huts alluded to, but their soldiers have the best of it in the grove. There is a funny water-wheel, which is used, I suppose, for irrigation; and the pent-up stream falls to it through banks carefully straightened. Here the soldiers are bathing, dozens of them at a time, splashing and laughing beneath the waterfall, whilst their chiefs swelter in frousy huts. And here also, on banks of wild sage, in a garden of wild hollyhocks, mouse-ear, wild gladiolus, monkshood, and flax, dwells your Special Correspondent in the brief hour granted him by fate. More exquisite colour is not to be conceived than the mingling of grey-green willows and acacia, with vineyards sloping down to their shadow, and a garden of wild-flowers underneath. I could stop a day with great content, only looking and dreaming of hardships past and to come: but the Grand Duke advances, and I must precede him. It is in the nature of grand dukes and commanders in chief to disturb and generally agitate correspondents. His Highness has arrived, and I must bid farewell to this charming bivouac.

CHAPTER V.

A HAZARDOUS MARCH.

AHIJAR (ADCHAIR), *July* 8.

I AM accompanying headquarters, which travel with General Radetsky for the moment. To left of ours, the Eighth Corps, moves the Twelfth, towards Rustchuk, commanded by the Grand Duke Vladimir, under direction of his brother, to be supported by the Thirteenth, General Hahn's. To right the Ninth, under General Krüdener, is marching towards Nicopolis. The Eleventh, Prince Schakoffskoi, follows us in the centre. General Zimmermann is conducting the Fourteenth through the Dobrudscha, and the Fourth, under General Zortoff, remains in reserve. The Seventh Corps lies about Odessa, and the Tenth in the Crimea. So the whole army is disposed at present.

This place is the headquarters to-night, and the Grand Duke Nicholas arrived an hour ago, just in time to avoid the pelting rain under which I write.

Movements of czars and sovereigns are reported by the winds of heaven, and everybody knows that the Emperor visited Carevica yesterday. To go further now would be too dangerous. As a foreign officer, not English, observed to me to-day, "*Il y a beaucoup du Turque dans la stratégie Russe*," and headquarters staff never put itself before into a position so unusual as is ours. General Ghourko's cavalry have occupied Tirnova, but at this moment there are no more than four chasseur battalions in front of us. The army which held Sistova is lost, and there were troops in Tirnova but a short while since; in fact, they fought enough to give General Ghourko his cross of Saint George. The impression is that those seven or eight battalions who opposed the crossing are gone to Rustchuk, but the staff feels not at all sure about it. In the same manner it is believed that the troops at Tirnova have retired into the Balkans, but nobody knows.

What remains certain, however, is the presence of a fine army at Rustchuk, not yet blocked in on this side. Two forced marches would bring a sufficient force to "eat up" four chasseur battalions, and play the mischief with our headquarters. The cavalry is far advanced, well disposed I doubt not,

and certainly active; but cavalry never yet stopped a vigorous raid; not seldom in the history of warfare it has failed to perceive the foe stealing through its positions. No one ignores this danger. It is too evident, in fact, for the youngest tyro to overlook. But we encamp, all the more cheerfully, if possible, and the Grand Duke contemplates with humour the chances of his fate with the Tcherkess.

All this is fine and brave and adventurous, but it is not war in the nineteenth century. The staff would declare with one voice that in presence of a European enemy such reckless proceedings would not be dreamed of. I am not sure. The Russian officer seems to be adventurous beyond most, and heedless of consequences, which he expects to escape —if he think about it—by desperate courage and desperate luck. The imperial princes in command burn to show that their manly virtue has not been sapped by the luxuries of the purple, and thoughtful observers may well dread lest we underrate the enemy too much. One danger only appears to engage the attention of the staff. The Grand Duke Nicholas exposes himself to this peril because he will not push his troops on until assured that the Czarewitch is safe in his perilous flank march. His own

life and others he will risk, so long as the central army moves in such slow fashion that if an attack be made upon the Crown Prince it can rush to his assistance. But neither for this nor any other cause will he resist the temptation to push forward himself.

But be the danger what it will, we who are not responsible for strategy had a delightful march this morning. Leaving Carevica at 6 a.m., we rode after General Radetsky till ten o'clock, when we reached this place. Where the Tcherkess are I do not know. Nobody can tell me what outposts on this very rainy night may lie beyond the orchard where I am camping. I write under conditions of great discomfort, but still I enjoy the recollection of my ride this morning, and piously hope for one like it to-morrow. My utmost ingenuity thus far has not discovered means by which to send this communication when finished, and from pure love of duty I write while the rain trickles through my waggon roof and beats upon my feet, already in a pool of water.

Our path lay over rolling downs, scarcely cultivated and scarcely peopled. There were high slopes to climb, where the wind blew pleasantly in our hot faces, and the awful dust lay still. From the hill-

tops we saw a huge expanse of such ground, through which the valleys wind and overlap. Not a tree in sight; rarely, at a distance, some small group of dusky huts, with little squares of yellow corn or deep green maize chequering the grey hillsides. Though the day was very hot, clouds hung over the path; whilst here and there, so wide the picture, distant slopes were flooded in a rush of sunshine. The march passed without incident, except an unexpected dash of Cossacks along the road, which produced a scene rather like that one fancies at the bottom of the Red Sea when Pharaoh's chariots and horses were startled by the returning waters.

At this small and utterly uninteresting village there never lived but one Turk, whose stores of hay and corn prove to be considerable. Near by dwelt a colony of Tcherkess, who are credited with the plunder of all things eatable for man or beast that formerly existed among the Christians. It may be that they looted, but that the judicious Bulgarian succeeded in hiding some part of his possessions I can guarantee. Money, displayed with liberality and judgment, brought out for our cattle some thirty bushels of oats, where officers and orderlies had departed empty.

Before leaving Carevica I desired to call upon General Radetsky, the commander of this *corps d'armée.* The General lived in a small cottage, built of mud and reeds, by the pond. Upon going thither I found cottage, yard, and all the space about occupied by a host of officers, in tunics snow white, boots unsoiled by dust, scabbards, spurs, and accoutrements as glittering as if brand-new. Strings of fine horses were led respectfully through the press, Cossack orderlies stood ready by their tats, trim servants gave directions. The headquarters staff had arrived an hour earlier than was expected.

I did not wish, of course, to disturb the General in such society, and had turned to go, when Colonel Orloff, commanding a regiment of Oural Cossacks, called to me from the gate by name, kindly asking what I wanted. Beside him stood a tall, stout young general, with florid face and laughing eyes—a man attractive at first sight, and a dashing soldier. I explained to Colonel Orloff my desire to leave a card upon General Radetsky, adding that I would send it. The younger officer exclaimed, "There is no need for that, M. le Correspondent. Give me your card, and the General will see you now." Quite unsuspiciously — and indeed half-consciously, for

I was taking mental notes of the lively scene—I produced my card, and the officer strode away. Colonel Orloff seized me by the arm, and whispered, between laughter and excitement, "*Savez-vous à qui vous avez donné votre carte? C'est le Grand Duc Vladimir!*"

The thing was done. His Highness had already reached the little "stoop" before the cottage in which a half-score of glittering magnates were drinking tea. I could but follow and present myself. General Radetsky was not there, but the Czarewitch was, his uncle the commander-in-chief, and several grand dukes. When the joke had been duly enjoyed, and his Highness had confessed that I was an innocent victim, the Grand Duke Nicholas-Nicholaevitch received me with great politeness, gave me a cup of tea and a seat, and talked for half an hour in English, whilst the younger princes joined in from time to time. The commander-in-chief is tall and powerfully built, like all members of this very handsome family. A perfect likeness of him in youth may be beheld in his son, I should think—a stature overtopping the tallest, a face rather pale, with long, grave features, which yet are kindly.

It appeared that my arrival interrupted a conver-

sation running upon the news of fresh outrages by Bashi-Bazouks. The Grand Duke narrated to me cruelties committed by the Turks near our line of march and in the Dobrudscha. A man, he said, whose hands had been tied in strips of his own skin, and who had been mutilated afterwards, was brought before the Czar and died in his presence. His Majesty turned to Colonel Wellesley and begged him to report what he had now seen with his own eyes. I have heard many such stories since the war began, but have never met with eye-witnesses before. After the Grand Duke's personal assurance, one can no longer doubt that the Turkish officers are sometimes unable to control the wretches whom they admit into their irregular forces. The Russian soldiery is said to be madly excited by these reports.

His Highness spoke warmly, detailing case after case, and asking what the English public thought of such things. I could only answer that brutality is hated at least as much by Englishmen as by any others. It was not a time nor place nor society for discussing the whole question, nor could I hide the conviction that things have been brought to such a pass in Turkey as makes radical change unavoidable. It is not that I, or any one else who knows them,

think the Ottoman a bad people. As a race they are superior to their Christian neighbours; but they fail in the first duty of government—they do not protect the good citizens against the bad.

Passing from this subject his Highness referred to England's conduct in sending the fleet again to Turkish waters. He repeated several times, both in French and English, "*Ce n'est pas beau, monsieur!*" —"It is not nice!" The indignation against our Government and country is growing yet more ardent, and burns the hotter the higher in society one goes. None but the magnates of Russia thoroughly comprehend what a killing strain is this war, and they are doubly bitter against all powers, chances, and combinations which may prolong, much more that may extend it. The bearing of the Grand Duke towards Colonel Wellesley was caused by a belief that his reports from St. Petersburg were the real cause of the war. It is universally credited here that our *attaché* misled both his own Government and that of Turkey as to the fighting power of Russia. Had he not declared, so they think, that she could not possibly make war, Turkey would have yielded, and war would never have taken place. The belief may be wrong in every point, but it is

certainly entertained here, and must be counted with. Colonel Wellesley may not have said so, or saying so he may have been right.

It is announced to-day that the Cossacks have entered Tirnova without fighting. The Moslem inhabitants remain along the route, but are disarmed. Three citizens of Batak have just been brought in here on a charge of concealing arms. They will probably be released. The Grand Duke Vladimir left here this morning for his command of the 12th Corps going to attack Rustchuk. That place may be expected to hold out for some time. It is amply fortified and provisioned, whilst the ground about it is peculiarly ill-suited for siege works.

IVANOVA, *July* 10.

Riding from Ahcair at 6 a.m., the Grand Duke's headquarters reached this village at 2.45 p.m., over a country like that traversed the day before, but more cultivated as we went on. It is not to be denied that a certain want of plan, or at least of resolution, characterises the proceedings of our commander. We left Sistova, and even Carevica, with the idea of marching upon Batak, which lies on the right road of the three leading to Tirno—I

speak in a military sense; people looking only at the map would call this the left road. Some think we lost our way this morning, and took the wrong track on leaving Ahcair. Certain it is that we traversed a country such as no general would willingly choose, unless compelled. It was rolling ground still, somewhat steeper perhaps, but the track was scarcely visible. Excellent horses, though ugly, are those of the military train, or they would have broken down. The waste, almost roadless, was soaked with last night's rain. Half-way up an incline, abrupt as a Welsh precipice, one waggon that fairly came to a stand might have stopped the column for hours. But the ugly little creatures pulled steadily, and with many a halt in unexpected places they carried their heavy loads over hill after hill. The foolish system of Russian driving was, however, conspicuously demonstrated. Four horses abreast make a handsome show, but upon any roads less wide than their own breadth one or more is necessarily useless. Often I saw carts travelling with the two outer horses quite "out of it"—up aloft, walking like gentlemen at large, whilst the middle ones strained in the deep-cut roadway.

Much might be written, and very much will be, of

the enthusiasm or the apathy of the population here, in presence of their deliverers. It seems to me that wealthy Bulgarians, those who have direct gain to make by independence, are decidedly pleased. I do not speak very confidently, because sufficient evidence is wanting. In the new state of things to arise, rich men may expect a position quite beyond their reach in Mahomedan society. Such people also have ideas as vague and foolish as they are ambitious, which they hope to carry out.

But are the poor quite grateful? I am not sure. Russians have complained to me that they show no enthusiasm, and I have seen none. They certainly make us pay as much as they know how. They do not welcome us on arrival at their villages. It is much if half-a-dozen fellows, very dirty and unshorn, assemble on a bank and stare whilst the columns file past. An old woman one sees by the rarest chance, a young one never, not even on entering the huts. These appear to have fled, like the Turks. Not one of the latter race remains along the march. I have seen no Turk at present saving the fine old cadi at Sistova. But I have seen some thousands of Turkish poultry, some hundreds of cattle, and not a few horses in Christian hands.

In this country Mahomedan and Christian villages seem to alternate. Both appear dead and empty as we pass; but a white-clad peasant may be seen, or a group of peasants even, upon close examination of the latter. The former may be recognised by thin wreaths of smoke, which ascend as we draw away, grow thicker and blacker as we look behind, and hang in the sky at length for a testimony. I do not accuse the Cossack of these fires; he takes what he can find in a deserted village, but I do not think he would dare set it alight, even if he wished. A general indignantly repudiated to-day the possibility that even one misdeed of the sort might have been committed by a Cossack in our army—"None of them went near Ebili or Razan," said he. The argument was strangely emphasised by the fact that we were actually eating fowls looted by Cossacks in those very villages, and that every officer within sight of our bivouac was doing the same! Our irregulars may or may not have burnt Ebili and the rest—I am inclined to believe they did not; but very certainly they looted these villages, for we were glad to purchase from them the bunches of poultry, geese, and ducks which they carried at the saddle-bow on returning. What else they may

have found besides cattle, horses, sheep, and lambs I have no idea.

Whilst on this subject I may refer again to the sack of Sistova, in which, as is warmly urged, the Russians had no part at all. I did not see them, nor did any impartial person, so far as is yet known; but this much I can declare, as can others, that the proceeds of the loot were offered for sale by Russian soldiers. Many of them came to the house in Simnitz where I was staying, and the women there set themselves up for life in Turkish embroidery, fine linen, and bits of silk. I could name persons who bought much more valuable things. Every man can draw his own inference. I do not myself blame the Cossack overmuch if he did plunder an empty house, which somebody was sure to loot; but I regret to hear that our pretty garden at Carevica has been ruined since we left.

RUSITA RIVER, *July* 11.

It is quite certain now that the course of the high road from Sistova to Tirno is incorrectly given upon all maps. After further wandering among the hills, in which we trod down crops enough to

satisfy even a Turkish pasha of the class accepted at Exeter Hall, we struck at length the high road quitted at Carevica. It is traced much too far left upon all the maps.

Our journey is no longer so reckless. At Ivanova a foreign colonel of hussars demanded but a hundred men to capture the whole headquarters of any army travelling as does ours. A colonel of Cossacks declared also that his regiment alone would stop our advance and cut our communications into little bits if called upon. We have now a whole brigade of the 9th Division with us, and another brigade upon our right, which will join us to-morrow. A *coup de main* would be still easy to-night, however. At Ivanova the Grand Duke and his staff took up their abode on the crest of a ridge, whilst the troops encamped on the plain beneath at a mile's distance. Here they have pushed on to Polikrast, four kilometres away, with a single battalion to guard them.

Russian soldiers are quick, as was well displayed this afternoon, when the four batteries sounded the depth of this river, stripped, crossed, and were ready for action on the other side in twenty minutes; but a few squadrons of Tcherkess are quicker. The ride is nearly finished, however;

it has been very pleasant. To-morrow we reach Tirnova. I write in a willow grove, beneath the rude but useful bridge that spans the river Rusita. Starting at 3 a.m. to-morrow I hope to avoid the monstrous train of baggage that accompanies our army. It trails already some three miles, though we have hitherto escaped the four hundred waggons that follow headquarters, starting always earlier than they. But to-morrow the camp here breaks up at 4.30 a.m., the Grand Duke moves from Polikrast at 5 a.m., and on the way General Dragomiroff's brigade strikes in from the right flank with a train of baggage probably not less than our own. I prefer the risk of meeting Tcherkess on the road to the discomfort of waiting till midnight for one's luggage, and I start at 3 a.m. by myself.

TIRNOVA, *July* 13.

A town such as this, to be at once, as this is, quite barbarous and unknown, could stand nowhere on earth save in Turkey. Were it in savagedom it would not be a town; were it in a civilised country it would be famous throughout the lands adjacent, so unique and so beautiful is it. Before reaching the kloof or gorge in which lies Tirnova, one traverses a

district more wealthy than picturesque. Beyond the Rusita river gentle slopes are yellow with corn, red-brown roofs peep above acacia-groves, white walls mark the frequent cattle-folds. Suddenly from this pleasant landscape rises a bleak chain of hills, with a very narrow gorge between their roughest crags. It turns sharply to the left, and opens out above a rapid burn, which would give unreasonable hopes to the salmon fisher. Trees and brush spring from the water's edge to the base of cliffs that rise like walls above the foliage. On either side, close by the entrance, stands a monastery big and solid as a fortress. The metal domes glitter like stars at a prodigious height. Only despots or priests could have built in such a spot, where days of labour must have been needed for the transport of each stone. The charming dale widens and contracts with a hundred varieties of beauty, until, above the crags upon one's right, another star suddenly shoots out. It gleams and twinkles, then vanishes behind the brush, presently to reappear. This is the rival, so long triumphant, of those twin luminaries at the entrance of the valley. Then the slender white minaret comes into view, and a glittering dome—then round a corner suddenly Tirnova appears.

It is the most fantastic of visions. Many travellers have admired the situation of St. Thomas, in the West Indies, where a town appears rather to hang than to rest upon three hills. Here before one is a horseshoe of houses—its groups broken in endless variety of shape—which hangs between sky and water. The streets are rather dry cataracts than aught made by man. One climbs to this eagle's nest by a long, straight incline, cut into the rock itself. Below, as one ascends, the precipice grows more dizzy at each step; above, the hardy trees and bushes project over one's head. Holes cut in the rock give shelter to pedestrians.

Here took place the ceremony of welcoming the Grand Duke. If you will fancy this steep incline, mounting straight from the rude but massive bridge, in the full blaze of sunshine; at top of it the arch of the town gate, and the gleaming minaret just behind; a double row of priests, magnificent in their antique finery, disposed, the one in shade, the other in sunlight; between them the archbishop, with mitre and robe and sacred jewels, standing before the tray of bread and salt; upon every roof-top in the great amphitheatre a crowd of persons gaily dressed, the rocks above hidden by faces craning down; riding

slowly up the empty steep, Nicholas-Nicholaevitch, looking hot and bored, and his brilliant staff in single file expressing the same sentiment with military frankness—fancy this scene, not difficult to paint, fill up with endless soldiers pouring across the bridge and over the hillside opposite, endless chains of artillery creeping along—then you will have an idea of Tirnova in the brightest day of its existence.

The enthusiasm of the townspeople and the simple soldiery overcame all artificial restraints. Staff officers who went into the demonstration with a cynic smile came away with throats twitching. These poor people on either side take the business so earnestly: they see nothing in this war but a rescue by the big, brave giant of the little brother oppressed. Religion is with them a living force, and they would hurrah to the war-cry of Godfrey de Bouillon. It does not strike the gentlemen in the same light. They don't feel by any means proud to claim such ugly and stupid relations as the Bulgar. Said a high and puissant seigneur the other day to me, "We Russians are pure gold. Do you think we would willingly alloy our blood with such dross as this?"

But enthusiasm is catching, and particularly that sort of enthusiasm called forth by one's own virtue. When a chorus of maidens sob out that one is noble and gallant and a hero of chivalry, though they be never so plain, a man feels inclined to love them. When old bearded priests sing at one, and call heaven's blessing down upon one's head, whilst their eyes stream,—though a man have no faith in sacred things he feels inclined to credit that they are right for once; and when all round him on one side accept the tribute, and on the other offer it with indescribable joy, he convinces himself easily that it is all deserved, and that he has done the finest things possible without knowing it.

Tirnova was the second capital of Bulgaria in those misty days when there was a king here. The first capital was Eskistamboul, by Shumla, which the Turks burnt early in their war of conquest. Not a trace remains, however, of the Christian rule. I suppose there were forts here, and a palace of some sort, old churches, and so on. Before Christian times also the country had been settled by races of high civilisation. But neither here nor elsewhere in Bulgaria remains one stone of fortress or palace or temple, whether Pagan or Christian or Turk, older

than "a few years ago," to put the thing with proper vagueness. If peace be more destructive of antique relics than war, Bulgaria should have enjoyed a long spell of quiet so utterly to uproot all traces of her early history. If it be said that the Turk has destroyed all these fine things, I must reply that he has destroyed his own antiquities also.

But there appears to be no sound reason for lamenting the disappearance of these treasures. Old Tirnova was probably not superior to the new. Constantinople has been called a humbug and a whited sepulchre—a heaven without, a sty within. Tirnova is worse. In its mean little streets, paved with cobble stones sloping towards the central gutter—in its dingy little stalls *à la Turque*, but without Turkish effect of colour or taste,—in its ugly and lumpish population, there is nothing but weariness to the flesh. Russian officers climb up and down the breakneck ways — my horses fell twice in dragging up a light waggon—and innocently wonder where and why the young girls are hiding. They see a crowd of children, a crowd of middle-aged women, and a crowd of wrinkled beldames, all gaily dressed, and many of them throwing flowers. But where those beauteous maidens of

Bulgaria whose wrongs have stirred all Russian chivalry? I point to a score of young girls in sight, but I am not believed.

The fact is that girlhood does not exist among these people. The female sex has apparently but three ages instead of four—childhood, middle age, and wrinkled decrepitude. At sixteen the heavy, dull features and colourless complexion of the girl make her look six-and-twenty; at six-and-twenty, if married, she seems a grandmother. I have not myself had the pleasure to observe one woman of good looks in Tirnova, nor one outside for that matter. Angrily do young officers sigh for the coquettish beauties of Bucharest.

The Turkish quarter has been plundered with a systematic industry and cupidity, the like of which has been seldom seen in our age. Hearing a noise of hammers in a house close by my own, I entered yesterday, and found an honest Bulgar working with great cheerfulness, his family around him. With the energetic aid of his wife he was unscrewing hinges and locks, whilst the children, in a business-like manner, loaded themselves with the window sashes. All day they went and came, bearing plunder neatly packed, and returning for more.

By nightfall, when I paid another visit, all the carved panelling of the guest-chamber had been removed, and I could honestly congratulate the Bulgar on his industry. He seemed modest, yet at the same time conscious of having done a fair day's work; and that feeling, as we know, is very pleasant.

The Turkish quarter contained many fine houses. There were not less, probably, than twelve thousand Mahomedans here—they outnumbered the Christians by a quarter; of these about thirty remain, most of whom have cast away the turban. I have taken up my abode in the house of the Grand Mufti, or chief magistrate, a personage of high importance. I am happy to think that nobody has much to say against him. He had built himself a fine residence, pink outside, with stabling for six horses in a covered court. Up the stairs leading thence one finds a handsome atrium, with the square hole in the roof, and the gap in the floor to correspond, surrounded by a light iron trelliswork. Three doors on one side, one on the other, all panelled in dark hard wood upon cedar mouldings, lead to inner suites of rooms, now three feet deep in wool and rags and litter. A divan runs along the wall of each apart-

ment, and of that also the woodwork has been ripped up.

By a little passage, so inconspicuous that it might almost be called secret, one reaches a narrow door looking upon the garden, but five or six feet above that level. Descending by a rough ladder and crossing the trampled parterre, one gains the harem, climbs a staircase above many cellars, passes a carved doorway, and reaches a suite of small apartments, neat enough, I have no doubt, when properly furnished, but now defaced and strewn with rubbish. Everything through both houses is as clean as human hands can make human things. I should feel no such shudder in dining off a Turkish floor as often overcomes me when presented with a Bulgar plate. Every dwelling in the Turkish quarter seems to have been built yesterday, so spotless is each bit of wood, so snowy the walls. All that I have entered have ceilings panelled with more or less of taste and expense, and doors inlaid. What Bulgarian houses I have observed certainly seem inferior in this respect also, for they are wretched imitations of such styles as we see in Europe, whilst the Turk has his own ideas and a fine sense of beauty.

Not a window is left in these houses, not a lock or a hinge. The very boards have been carried away. I could describe many droll little scenes from observation. The plunderers visit my dwelling in bands, three or four each hour, and I do not kick them out, for their sordid cynicism amuses me. A gang of old women visited me this morning, and a keen-nosed beldame of the crew discovered a trap-door above my head. Great excitement!—much eager clucking!—when Bulgar women become agitated, their language sounds just like the cackle of poultry. At length, the hideous creature requested me to move; I declined with emphasis. Meanwhile, a ladder had been brought, and half a dozen haridans planted it by my seat. Then I saw the difficulty, which—*enfin, où la décence va-t-elle se nicher?* More clucking and more cackle! Presently the ugliest of all came pushing through, and boldly set her foot upon the ladder—the cunning old wretch had trotted home and slipped into a pair of her husband's garments! But her friends failed to appreciate the ingenious thought. They seized upon her, and held her back, she struggling. It was hideous fun. In the turmoil others slipped away and bound their filthy dresses tight around the ankle with bits of rag

knotted together—there was rag enough to re-clothe them all upon my floor. Then these clever ones made a rush for it, and I fled in alarm;—they would certainly have touched me had I stayed. Pell mell, hanging to each other, fighting and cackling, they went up—and found nothing. So their foolish sisters jeered.

GABROVA, *July* 15.

I have had the pleasure of being lost amongst those cornfields and orchards where the Bashi-Bazouk is supposed to be disporting himself. The Bashi-Bazouk resembles Madame Benoiton in the famous play—one hears of him without ceasing; he plays an important part, he is always coming or just gone, but somehow one never catches him. In the name of humanity and common justice, I deny that every Mahomedan who fires a shot in defence of his homestead and his family becomes on that account a Bashi-Bazouk. He was a peasant, and such he remains, though now he fights for his own against an invader.

But it has come to this in the modern crusade, that the Mussulman has no right of property—that

if he defends himself against Christian plunderers he is *ipso facto* condemned to death as a violator of women and a murderer. For my part I admit no such thing. Naturally, however, to excuse their own lawless deeds, the Bulgarians begin to make out a case against the oppressor such as they themselves would have stared at a few days ago. One formerly met numbers to declare that no Turk had done them harm; that they lived on fair terms together. This is not now the case, for if it were, how should the wanton mischief and the looting be excused? Every man you meet has suffered awful things, or his brother has, or somebody. A tradesman in Tirnova boldly alleges to me that it was not safe to walk through the streets seven days ago, because the little Turkish boys pelted every Christian to death. It did not really seem worth while to ask, under the circumstances, how he and so many thousand Christians kept shops for so many years without once undergoing this dreadful fate. But such tales will go down in history now, since the people who cry loudest can always drown the voice of truth, let proverbs say what they will. I am rather sick of impalpable horrors. One man has been found with his fingers cut off, and he was instantly carried to

the Emperor. I have seen no other case, but every moment I hear of hundreds.

I wish that all our English mountain roads were as good, our bridges as handsome and as solid, as those in wretched, oppressed Bulgaria. I wish our peasantry, as a rule, owned such marvellous crops, such fruitful orchards, such comfortable, well-built houses as in this part. Mile after mile one travels through the standing grain, yellow wheat, grey oats, "smiling barley," and dark-green maize. The land is parcelled in squares, and no space remains for pasturage upon the slopes; but there are fells and mountain meadows for the cattle. The very woods are cut and hollowed with mathematical exactitude, that no inch of ground may be wasted. No landscape like this is to be seen wherever I have travelled —so full of natural wealth and so richly cultivated. But how the people work! If there be a number reaping or hoeing maize, they may waste a precious moment in one glance towards the road; but if they be only man and wife in their own patch, an earthquake might roll "unheedingly away."

Such a country and such a people, wisely administered, should bring an inexhaustible fortune to the sovereign who obtains them in the scramble.

Russian soldiers take advantage of the enthusiasm they cause, and on the road, as in Tirnova, they lay a grateful people under tribute. Whilst a trader was showing me with pride a marvel of ugliness which he called a Bulgar carpet, two soldiers entered, asking money from their brother, and received it, not without a grimace from that affectionate relative. Fourteen francs, he told me, had liberty cost him that day. The men asked me also, and would hardly be denied on the assurance that I was a foreigner. I do not insist at all upon these facts, nor much upon certain burglaries and attempts committed. The townspeople set a monstrously bad example of the sort; and "epaulettes aren't the best mark of a saint," as we know. But, without making too much of them, the fact should be noted.

In riding across country—for I was lost—I saw no Bashi-Bazouks, nor heard of any, from 5 a.m. to 4 p.m. Yet this is the country of which dismal accounts have been circulating so close as Tirnova. At Illyana, for instance, I was first assured that there were horrors without name daily committing; but when Prince Eugene Leuchtenberg, going thither with his cavalry, found the country peaceful

as an ideal village, the exploits of the Bashi-Bazouks were transferred in this direction.

I left Tirnova to join a force despatched under General Derojinsky to take and hold the Pass of Schipka. Being delayed, however, I could not start with the troops, and had to follow, asking my way. Heaven help the unfortunate who falls into such a plight in Bulgaria. Its peasantry know neither time, distance, nor numbers. Half-a-dozen at least assured me that the troops had passed upon the road I was following, described the column, and spoke enthusiastically. Some said it had passed two hours before, some three, some four. The fact is that it had passed two days ago. For numbers and distance they show a like incapacity to judge, and Russian staff officers are distracted by conflicting reports, all of which are probably wrong.

At length, close by Illyana, I met a tradesman who explained the mistake, and pointed out a cross-road which, said he, would take me to Gabrova, or Gabro. Of course it did nothing of the sort, landing me, after some hours' riding, at Plakova, where I found a score of Cossacks come to hunt Bashi-Bazouks which were non-existent. Here, whilst the inhabitants were regarding me with great suspicion

—not the Cossacks, of course—Captain Voitserkoffsky, on his way to join General Gourko in parts unknown, came to my assistance. He told the people generally that they were a lot of boobies, and found me a guide, with whom I resumed my journey. By good luck, or possibly "from information received," this very ugly Bulgar led me not to Gabro, but to Drenova, where I found General Derojinsky.

About forty miles was my day's ride, and I described more than half a circle. Through all that space the signs of peace and plenty and comfort abounded as they abound in few lands. It was one cornfield on the slopes, with here and there a stretch of vineyard; one wood, carefully lopped and tended, on the heights. All that one saw of misery was the doing of Bulgars—a Mahomedan village empty and sacked, Mahomedan crops falling to earth for want of hands to gather them;—be sure, however, that they will not be wasted.

At Drenova I found the young Grand Duke Nicholas, who has chosen this force as the one most likely to have hot work. And he is evidently not mistaken; but it is not worth while to send military news by letter. His Highness cannot be reproached with too great luxury on campaign. The fare set

before us in a most delightful bivouac was as plain as it could be, and the grave soldier-servants came to their wits' end for knives and forks. But though the Grand Duke gives no trouble on this account, his presence is not less awkward. The General vanishes before him. I do not know how it will be in the actual field of battle, but upon the march he takes the lead entirely. Officers sent to reconnoitre give their report to him first; in fact, General Derojinsky stayed behind with the infantry. Thoughtful officers were rather afraid that his Highness, and the dashing companions with him, would make a *coup de tête* on arrival here, before properly observing the enemy's position. Prudence has prevailed, however. We wait the arrival of the whole brigade before attacking, and then it is likely to be warm.

I should have wished to say something of this charming village, but I have left myself no room. Suffice it that a mountain settlement more delightfully situated, more picturesquely broken by unexpected gleams of water, whilst at the same time more comfortable for its inhabitants, could not be found in any of those lands where the Bashi-Bazouk is not even talked of.

The Turks have been fortifying themselves for a long time past at Sfetgo Nicola, three hours from Gabrova. Their tents are plainly visible, but the natives cannot guess their number. They have done no more harm to the population during the many months they have been lying at Sfetgo Nicola than to steal a sheep occasionally, or take fodder. This heavy indictment is brought against them by an old and enthusiastic patriot from Gabrova, who is anxious that I should correctly report the condition of Bulgaria. I do not exaggerate in saying that few English villages of like size possess one bridge as solid and handsome as the four boasted by this tiny settlement, nor could the roads be easily beaten. If such are the results of Turkish misrule, what wonders ought we not to expect from Bulgaria free?

GABROVA, *Monday.*

Our scouts have been reconnoitring the Turkish position in the Schipka Pass. The result is not altogether satisfactory, for it is already evident that it cannot be carried without hard fighting.

What lies behind we know not, nor can the Russian military authorities discover whether the

position before us is the only one which the Turks have prepared, or whether, as is probable, the capture of the one before us will be but the prelude to other struggles equally arduous.

Foot traffic across the Pass has not been stopped until within the last few days, and many people have been found and examined as to what they saw in coming over it. The Bulgarian peasant is, however, the most obtuse and incurious of men, and these might as well have come across with their eyes shut for anything which they seem to have observed. They all reported that nothing has been done to defend the Pass, and if any general had depended upon their statement he would have suffered a very severe check.

A party of Cossacks, however, under a lieutenant, pushed forward near enough to draw the enemy's fire, and succeeded in obtaining a fair idea of the positions at present occupied by the Turks.

Formidable works have been erected by them; a battery of Krupp guns has been placed flush with the road.

It is said that the guns have only been a few days in position, having been brought over the Pass by the labour of a great number of peasants from the

other side. The position is admirably chosen, and there is no ground whatever upon which artillery can be brought to bear upon it with the exception of a distant hill-top. This has been already occupied by Cossacks.

General Derojinski has sent back a report of the situation to headquarters at Tirnova. He expects that reinforcements will be sent, and that he will be ordered to attack the position, in which case the encounter will be a desperate one.

From this town we can see a small Turkish camp on the shoulder of Chervenbagh, some three miles hence; but a larger camp is known to lie behind this. From what can be discovered by the reconnaissances which have been made, or gleaned from Bulgarian reports, the Turkish force in the Pass consists of five battalions of regulars, one regiment of regular cavalry, a battery of Krupp guns, and a mountain battery, besides a large force of irregulars.

The best hope of obtaining possession of the Pass appears to be from the action of General Gourko. He has already crossed the Balkans by an unguarded footpath. He is reported to be confronted by the Turks, and reinforcements are going forward to him. His object, of course, is to take the defile in the rear.

At present our own position here is not without danger, for we could be cut off from Tirnova without difficulty. The Turks, however, appear to have no enterprise, for our march was very carelessly conducted, and we might have been cut to pieces at any time by an active enemy.

Selvie has been occupied. Of four irregulars found there three were shot this morning, and one Softa sent on to the Grand Duke at Terno for execution. Every Mussulman driven from his house by Bulgarian plunderers is seized upon by the Cossacks as a Bashi-Bazouk, and as such is shot forthwith.

The Emperor is expected at Tirnova in three days.

July 18.

The lengthy telegrams I have sent from the beginning of this attempt to force the Schipka Pass make it unnecessary for me to write upon the situation. If they have not reached you, having been sent through three different channels, I cannot hope that a letter will be more fortunate. At this point I am far beyond reach of telegraph offices, and even the field-post, such as it is, lies forty miles behind me. Only poor men will undertake a ride of several days in such

cruel heat for any reward, and they know very well that punishment for the swindle is not likely to overtake them if they pocket my money and neglect my commission. I have not yet learnt what good qualities are to be laid to the Bulgarian account, save a bull-dog industry, but "the noblest work of God" is not an every-day sight among this people. I can only write on, and pray that I do not write in vain.

The full story of our first attempt to force the Schipka Pass I forwarded early this morning; it remains only to fill in outlines. This village or little town of Gabro, as people abbreviate the name, is a wonder of picturesque comfort. Water is all round it, through it, above it, and below. Wherever one leaves the street, one comes upon a waterfall and a bridge. Four structures of stone cross the main river, each of them such as a British mountain town three times the size would be proud of.

Haters of the "Unspeakable" are used to say, when such awkward phenomena are put before them, "Oh, but that is the doing of Midhat Pasha, when he governed the vilayet; that was a golden age, preceded and followed by chaos." I have been at pains to verify the fact that none of these fine

bridges were built by Midhat. The dates I cannot give, since very few Bulgars read Turkish, though many speak it, and the inscriptions are almost illegible, save in one case.

Besides these stone bridges there are three of wood, —the little place has about four thousand inhabitants. Some of our English local boards might be jealous of the energy and resources of a Turkish pasha in this respect, I think. But more surprising still it is to see, when one enters the horrid defile, which all must recollect with a shudder, how excellent are the bridges and culverts thrown across where necessary.

Painful reminiscences possess me when I think of the march yesterday, which we must make again once at least. I would my horse could tell the story. For a matter of three miles the road is tolerable, quite as good as anything in Roumania, and better than in Servia. Suddenly it comes to an end where a broad mountain stream, whose course we have followed hitherto, crossing and re-crossing it, winds away up the hills. Here, for those who would go to Schipka, lies a sheet of stone, at an angle of thirty degrees or so. The strata are thrown upward at a very sharp angle, and one is allowed a bitter choice between the keen edges of the upturned stone and

the triturated hollow lying between their layers. Earth there is none, save at spots inaccessible, where bushes gnarled and prickly forbid a passage.

Such is the Pass of Schipka from bottom to top, a distance of three miles perhaps. Here and there one comes across a wretched fragment of the ancient road, which was doubtless a fine work of its rough sort—a causeway eight feet wide, paved with big stones, and drained through the middle. Very much more of this may remain, covered with grass and bushes, for we evidently do not follow its course in the present track. But when the roads come near each other occur the most awful of our miseries. For frost and rain and melting snow have split up the pavement, and carried it in heaps across those strata mentioned, piling up the huge cobble stones loosely, and erecting a low barricade twenty or a hundred feet in breadth.

It is certain that vehicles never crossed this defile, unless made for the very purpose, and dragged by bullocks trained to the work.* Though incorrect upon

* The fact is that the road breaks up every winter, and needs re-making each spring. This had not been done, when so much work more important demanded attention. The Schipka Pass is the regular route between Bulgaria and Roumelia.

almost every point upon which they are asked questions by the staff or by anybody else, the Bulgars may be right in saying that the Turks crossed here in their flight with families and waggons. Fear is a marvellous driver. They harnessed six and eight span of oxen, hired and paid for, and forced themselves over somehow, with what loss is not known. Three days they were, mostly, in passing a distance of five miles. Why such an awful track should have been selected for the post road is a Turkish mystery. Both post and telegraph crossed it, however, and therefore it was fortified, I suppose, while routes more accessible were left open. For no better reason are we now attacking it, for the army will scarcely follow us, I should think, though nothing is yet known about that point. In the meanwhile all the Bulgars available have been set to work mending the route.

Russian soldiers are as tough as they are gallant, but our little force was terribly "pumped" after seven hours' march. It was known also in the ranks, as those things are always known, that the attempt was considered hopeless by those best qualified to know. But General Mirsky, arriving at 2 a.m., ordered an attack at every hazard. We know now

that the venture was not quite so desperate as it seemed. Orders had been sent to General Gourko that he should attack simultaneously from the other side. Several days ago his brigade of cavalry, backed by a regiment of tirailleurs, had passed the Balkans near Illyana. It had since taken Kasanlik, burned Enisagra, and even occupied Schipka. Having thus demonstrated beyond all cavil that the Balkans are actually crossed, one would expect to see the Turkish garrisons pushing southward for another defence elsewhere. Not at all. Every man from Kasanlik and the other places occupied had rushed to swell the defenders of this Pass. General Gourko conceived that there might be twenty battalions of regulars here, but he did not hesitate to attack them in their chosen position with half their numbers. A message, as I have said, had been forwarded by mountain tracks to Schipka, informing the General of our design. It did not reach its destination, and at the pinch we received no help from the other side.

To right, by a side track, marched two companies and two guns, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Hamincar. In centre, six companies and four guns, commanded by Major-General Derojinsky. The

Grand Duke and General Mirsky, who commands the 9th Division, marched with this body. At the first halt a company was sent back to guard the camp, and the guns, unable to go farther, joined the right column. To left, under Colonel Orloff, of the Cossacks, went two companies, two guns, and all the force of Cossacks—about two hundred. The night before, two companies had been sent along this road to observe, and with great gallantry they had captured a most important earthwork as soon as morning dawned. Having crept up during night they stormed it with the bayonet, losing four killed and fifteen wounded.

Orloff's force was doubled by junction with these, but his operations were conducted nearly four miles from the main position of the Turks, so wide and elaborate have been their preparations. The chief defence is a large quadrangular earthwork, covered in front by bushes and broken ground. It lies in a hollow, with the angle almost touching the road, which makes such a bend here that two sides of the work can concentrate their fire upon it. Behind this, upon the right, stands a round guard-house, occupied in former times by the gendarmerie appointed to keep the way clear. This has been in-

trenched and strengthened into a formidable position also. Behind the shoulder of the hill is a large work and a number of tents, plainly visible from this camp, although concealed from those going up the Pass, and in reality upon the Schipka side. There was a position in front of all these, upon which no great labour had been disposed; the Turks abandoned it at our approach. Also there are works right and left in the mountains not visible from the Pass, guarding little tracks.

At two o'clock the climb was finished, and one company of the centre column threw themselves down upon the rocks within easy range of the enemy, but sheltered by the ground. A number of officers rode on some hundred yards to a smooth round hill overlooking the valley. We all stood upon its crown unmolested, and regarded the work before us without pleasurable feelings. Seven or eight hundred yards away stood the great quadrangle mentioned. The road, here quite good and smooth enough, passes beside it. Farther on we saw the guard-house, and we knew there was much more behind. We stood on horseback for five minutes at least, at half-rifle range, and nobody fired, though Turks were swarming about the farther side of the little valley.

The more our officers looked at the situation the less they liked it. Two or three, however, prepared to breakfast after the long ride, when the call of a bugle was heard, and a minute afterwards Colonel Strukoff came hurrying down to his horse. "They are making a sortie," he cried; "look out for yourselves!" I picked up the fragments of our untouched breakfast, whilst every officer dashed in one direction or another to call up the first company, to hurry on the rest, to warn the General. The company resting three or four hundred yards behind us came swinging up through the rocks. As I hastened to put my horse in safety I met another, the men doubling over that rough ground. Fine troops indeed are the Russian. After such a march they pressed on to the fight, silent, quiet, and collected.

I caught up this second company after fastening my horse. It bent towards the left, so as to form line with the company in advance, which had some difficult ground to traverse. Following Colonel Baron Löhneyssen, military commissioner of Austria here, I got into the first line just as the Turks answered the fire of our comrades. One glance was again allowed me over the little valley, now covered with Turks, in their shirt sleeves apparently,

or in dark-blue suits—one look at the bushes opposite, and the hurly-burly began. Overhead for a mile in our rear the bullets hummed and sang and spat viciously, as they passed higher or lower, or whizzed by one's skull. Nowhere on the field, nor even in the hospital behind, could a non-combatant find safety if he tried.

The walk back after I had passed the shelter of the hill was an adventure to reflect. Scores of Bulgarian volunteers were stretched as flat as lizards on the ground, with their heads and as much of their bodies as possible thrust between two rocks. Red Cross attendants lay prone in holes, with their arms and legs tucked in so neatly that one might think they practised the attitude in drill; but they, of course, were acting as duty bade them. The balls kept up their infernal melody overhead and around, whilst I looked for the staff, which had taken shelter in a dell, after miraculously escaping a point-blank volley. Unable to find them, I returned to my horse, just in time to see her cast loose by two Cossacks carrying a wounded comrade into the shade.

At a quarter to three the right-hand column got one gun into position upon a low hill, and slowly fired shell. The other guns did not arrive in time to

take an effectual part in the action. Colonel Orloff, on the left, had pressed forward with desperate courage, though two companies, nearly half his force, had been almost annihilated at the very outset. Out of four hundred and fifty men a hundred and fifty fell. But he went on, as it now appears, stormed another earthwork in his front, and was preparing, with his handful of men, to attack the main body of Turks in flank, when General Mirsky recalled him. There should be many crosses to distribute amongst Orloff's command.

Meanwhile there was no movement in the centre. The enemy could not advance to take that hill on which we had stood—he ought to have occupied it hours before; and for the Russians only to stand erect upon the brow would have been extermination. I sat behind a rock three hundred yards below the hill, listening to the hum and vicious spit aforesaid, remarking how balls cut a telegraph wire, and how they spatter upon stone. These interesting observations I varied from time to time by a prudent glance over the field, to assure myself that the Turks were not yet charging through us, nor we advancing.

In the road by my position, flat upon their stomachs, but hysterically lively, the personal

attendants of the Grand Duke established themselves. Their orders enjoined them to keep up with the staff, and they were executed with that conscience which is a fine trait of Russian servitors. These good fellows had driven their one-horse cart —bearing his Highness's lunch—a mile, at least, beyond the limit of the possible, and from thence had made their way on foot, with flasks and baskets. They would now have gone forward through the bullet-storm, had not an officer assured them that their master lay under a bank, not a hundred yards beyond. At ease about their duty, they laid themselves down, and made breathless jokes, imitating the ceaseless pinge of balls overhead. Having no other matter to engage me, I was amused to observe these servants. We know—or I, at least, have seen—how others of their like would have behaved, but I do not care to enter into detail about Frenchmen or Italians. The English soldier-servant would perhaps not have lain full length; he would certainly have sworn and grumbled at his master, his enemy, and his fate. These Russians took the thing as it came, and accepted their chance good-humouredly, anxious only to obey orders. There is a very fine quality in the Muscovite after all the truth be stated against him;

—I venture to think that Mr. Carlyle wrote famous nonsense in his letter to the *Times* about Russ and Turk, but the former do in truth obey implicitly. The misfortune is that they follow such bad leaders, and execute their worst behests so conscientiously. It is a grand thing to be a faithful and fearless dog, but not grand for a human creature to be a dog at all. Besides, the Turk obeys with even greater willingness. Has he a worse master? Both enemies, now face to face, represent the old order of humanity—"the faithful service of the antique world." But if I tell my honest Turk to do a vile action—to commit a crime, a sin, a dirty deed for me—he will refuse. My honest Russ will not. Religion and manhood are living forces with the one; the other knows superstition, but nothing else. The Turk obeys intelligently and willingly; the Russian has no thought or spirit in the matter. Both are ignorant utterly, but the one has lights and acts by them, the other works like a machine—of good or evil influence as the chance may be. Which is the more hopeful? Before setting the first figures of this calculation, we must know what the Russian will be when he comes to have lights of his own. Will they be the will-o'-wisps of Nihilism? So it seems.

This chain of thought was broken by the appearance of the young Grand Duke, who came slowly down the road, cracking his whip. He said a laughing word to me in passing, and entered the blockhouse. Whilst pondering whether to follow him or no, Prince Mirsky came in sight, solitary also, also cracking his whip, and bound, likewise, for the blockhouse. Then came another and another of the staff, all beating time with their whips, all gay and easy in their minds, though the crackle of musketry in front became more fierce, and the balls sung over and around with music more venomous. I had not found in my heart such courage as to enter the blockhouse whilst the companions of my morning ride were facing death point-blank, but when so many of them returned to shelter my scruples vanished. I also strolled into the blockhouse, regretting only that my English whip would not crack. The wounded began to drop in faster and faster, and we had ample work to attend on them, to give them water, shift their bandages, and arrange them on the stretchers. I was much interested to observe the quiet disregard of peril shown by our Bulgar water-carriers and stretcher-men. The bullets pinging above us struck the road in scores behind and below, for it

turns almost at a right angle to pass the blockhouse. They must have known the danger perfectly, since we could see the puffs of dust arise each second, and they had already made the venture a score of times. But they took up their loads or water-barrels quite composedly, and set back for their trudge, not hurrying over the dangerous part, so far as I could see. We observe the same passive courage in Chinamen, and there also it is allied with ferocity towards the defenceless, and cowardice towards an attacking foe.

Such anxious consultations were going on between General Mirsky, General Derojinsky, and other chiefs, that the Grand Duke, who busied himself with the wounded, was pleased to have my assistance, and said so. There were no doctors at the blockhouse, only two "dressers," but the men arrived, nearly all, with a bandage neatly adjusted. It struck me as interesting that those wounded in the limbs were feverishly full of fight, whilst body-wounds appeared to roll the victim over, leaving him no thought but of escape from the field. A great proportion were struck in the head, and these simply groaned, without apparent understanding of their position.

The horses of the staff had been led round the

blockhouse to the sheltered side, where, under cover of the walls, we took lunch. A staff officer asked me, "Is it true that the bullets are falling down below there?" pointing to the path which wound away to right and below us—it was covered with Bulgars carrying the wounded. "You may see some of those fellows drop in a moment," I replied, but there was no such ill-luck: The men flinched continually, and puffs of dust rose all about their feet, but none fell for the instant. Presently there was a move, and I said to Baron Löhneyssen, "*Le grand duc s'en va?*" "*Ce n'est pas possible!*" he answered sharply, for the fire had not quieted at all, and the ring of Turkish bullets was as musical as ever all about us. But in a very few moments the impossible became a solid fact. The Grand Duke went straightforward down the slope, which was as nearly perpendicular as a field of corn can be; after him the horses, a Cossack at each bridle; and then the staff, with Cossacks following and upholding by main force their frightened chargers. No fourfooted thing except a goat could have descended that precipice in a straight line. Baron Löhneyssen only tried to lead his horse, one of the prettiest in our cavalcade, and an awful time he had of

it. The day was "screeching" hot, and the staff led us, as the crow flies, over cornfields and dry ravine and mountain pasture to the spot, a mile below, where the hospital had been set up. Ouf! that was a march! Before it was done, not the yell of Bashi-Bazouks pursuing would have stirred me to a trot! Just below the hospital—for it had been pitched upon a "rise"—I lost the Baron. Hardened soldier as he is, the exertion had been so much for him that his strength gave out. A dozen times I had to hurry on and beg the Cossacks to wait a moment, for his spirited young horse would not be left in the rear, and time after time, between terror and impatience, it knocked its master over. The Baron, utterly worn out, sat down to rest within fifty yards of the hospital, under a bush. But he was started again, within ten minutes, by the sing of three balls, which struck the earth, one after another, at three feet distance. Such an incredible range have our Martini-Henry guns. The hospital was supposed to be a mile behind the Russian lines, but a soldier was hit there whilst the surgeon dressed his former wound.

We left the men encamped, and as soon as the Turks gave sign that they had had enough

of it our troops were withdrawn to a comfortable bivouac in the rear. There they wait events, very cheerful and confident. It appears to me likely that the total loss on the day's work has been four hundred and fifty to six hundred and fifty men out of thirty-five hundred—an awful average. But I will answer for it that the survivors charge to-morrow if called upon, without one question.

GABROVA, *Thursday, July* 19.

Yesterday General Gourko, with the cavalry division lately commanded by General Skobeleff the elder, a brigade of Russian infantry, and the Bulgarian legion, began attacking the Schipka Pass from the south, having already occupied Kasanlik. He assailed the Turkish position, and was repulsed with heavy loss. We heard and saw the firing from this camp, but communications are so difficult here that it was already too late to aid him when a messenger arrived.

The whole population of the country-side has been pressed, within the last day or two, to improve the road, and it is not now absolutely dangerous to ride up the Pass.

News reaches us that the Minsky regiment, already so distinguished by its conduct at the passage of the Danube, will be with us to-morrow.

This morning an advance was made on the Turkish positions from this side. Three companies which bore part in the first attack and encamped in the road had boldly challenged the Turkish fire; but, as was explained by a prisoner, as soon as the Turkish general saw our little column approaching, he set spurs to his horse and vanished into space. Every Turk followed, and the whole force, consisting of fourteen battalions of regular troops, broke up, leaving everything where it lay, and abandoning eight positions designed with admirable skill; in fact, both the choice of positions and their works were of a kind to excite the admiration of our engineers. In a dip of the hills we found that camp for which we had vainly looked, and behind one of the tents something much more terrible —a Russian head, which was dusty, hacked about, and had been evidently kicked from place to place.

Going farther we explored eight intrenchments more, formidably arranged upon an excellent plan, commanding each other, and all commanding the road. Nothing was found there but evidence of

hasty flight. The garrison was not actually starving, for biscuits, cattle, and an abundance of vegetables were found.

Five mountain guns and two Krupps were taken. Tents, and huts made of branches, filled every valley. In one of these were found three regimental flags of green silk handsomely embroidered.

Few prisoners have been taken as yet, but as ten thousand men at least had broken up and sought the woods, we expect to see these trooping in shortly.

Our losses in recent actions have been relatively terrible. This force has been more than decimated, and we have as yet no idea of General Gourko's loss. Out of sixty Cossacks Colonel Orloff lost fifteen dead and seriously wounded.

The Balkans have now been forced in a spot most carefully defended, and that with no real effort, for Gourko's force and our own united did not approach the Turkish in numbers. Nothing visible remains to defend Adrianople, on the farther side the mountains at least.

Friday.

I telegraphed yesterday of one human head which we discovered in the gloaming, as we returned from a

hasty scramble up the Pass. This morning Prince Mirsky went to explore the abandoned positions, and I paid them another visit in his suite. Dreadful sights awaited us. In the morning fatigue parties had been sent out to bury the dead, who are lying in great numbers about the hillside. But this work was abruptly interrupted upon the discovery of more heads and sound limbs, of which the bodies were missing;—the savage trophies of victory having been pitched towards the camp. A search was begun among the brushwood, and when we reached the spot some twenty-four bodies had been recovered. The heads collected were gathered in a heap at the foot of a rude cross.

It was a sight too ghastly to dwell upon. On opening the black mouths of some, we found that the tongues had been cut out. I saw a leg and an arm protruding like models in white wax dabbled in blood. There were probably more underneath.

Half a company of soldiers stood by, waiting until the priest, who stood book in hand, should begin the funeral service. The staff paused meanwhile, with uncovered heads, looking at the spectacle, and talking in whispers.

I saw the human slaughter-house at Coomassie and shuddered at African barbarity, but we have savages as vile in Europe.

Farther on, along a bleak hillside, were ranged the mutilated bodies. They had not been stripped, but their clothes were torn open for the hideous work to be done. Perhaps a score of headless men lay there, among others who had been killed in the fight and left untouched, but I was too sick to count. Certainly all have not been discovered, as we know by a fearful computation of the limbs.

Among the mutilated was one still bearing a Red Cross brassard. He was a soldier. Raising gently the white cloth that had been thrown over him I was shown his ribs and thighs, all gashed; the foulest possible mutilation had been committed. Another cloth was raised, and I was shown a similar spectacle. The Russian dead, of whom there were many, had been left untouched, but the wounded, after being put to torture, had been beheaded. I know this by the same ghastly experience in Ashantee, for each headless corpse had its fingers bent and clutching at its throat, as had our own wounded soldier who was massacred at Ameaful.

Those killed by shot lay in other attitudes, and all

who lay in other attitudes were neither mutilated nor beheaded.

One more observation. All these heads were cut off clean, not hacked as with a sword or axe. A knife must have been used for this difficult operation. Had these deeds been committed by Bashi-Bazouks, no one would have been surprised, but all the prisoners agree that the fourteen battalions on Schipka were all Redifs and Nizams.

It must be admitted, nevertheless, that among the Turkish corpses lying about—many hundreds of them, in every hideous form of death—I myself saw two negroes. They were dressed in the blue uniform of regulars, but a negro remains a negro, dress him as one will. Officers, as was pointed out, could not fail to see the heads and limbs, since they lay, when found, close by the tents. But I do not see, on reflection, what argument can be drawn from this. The men thus mutilated had belonged to Gourko's army, and after his attack officers had business in hand which might well prevent them from punishing the villains who did these acts, or even from noticing them. The bodies had been thrown into the woods as if to hide them.

All the Pass was thick with Bulgars—men, women, and children, carrying plunder and arms—upon the battle-field we saw them stripping the dead and making into bundles their spoil.

CHAPTER VI.

AT HEADQUARTERS.

BIELA, *July* 24.

THE human form divine can endure much greater fatigue than might be supposed by gentlemen who sit at home at ease, especially when it is supported by "man's noblest companion." But as there are drunkards who lose their feet long before their heads are affected, so a man's support often gives way, whilst he himself remains full of energy. That is my case at the present moment. A leisurely review of the situation from that mountain height whence I could look down upon Schipka and Kasanlik, nay, Philippopolis itself almost, satisfied me that to descend the Pass would be waste of time for the mere sake of curiosity. Nothing can be seriously attempted there until our flanks are secured against attack. Reckless as are the Russian generals, they do not think of committing such an act of folly. The Turks have been so profoundly tranquil that many persons even here forget the hundred and fifty

thousand Nizams who hang upon one flank or the other, men brave as any, dogged and desperate. The fall of Nicopolis has done something, but not all, to clear our way upon the right; but Widdin remains with an unknown force, and many broken detachments here or there which, if gathered together, would make a large army. Then there is Rustchuk, with fifty thousand fighting men, and Schumla, said to contain as many. The Schipka Pass taken, our "army of invasion" must needs come to a standstill, I think, and now or never the Turks must move. Accordingly I have ridden back along the line of advance, and already I congratulate myself upon that resolution.

But it is no inconsiderable distance that we have now advanced "into the bowels of the land." The exciting events which I tried daily to chronicle—I hope only that my numerous despatches were received—had exhausted my resources. The country has been utterly drained of horseflesh, and the people are so densely and incredibly stupid, leaving their knavery aside, that I could trust scarce any of them to carry a message. So that when I came to leave Gabrova I had not a man to drive the cart or look after the horses, much more to interpret.

At Tirno—the last syllable is dropped in pronouncing all names ending in "ova"—the Grand Duke was most polite, and himself forwarded a telegram by Cossack relays. He even directed me to send my despatches to his personal care in future, —a permission to be used discreetly, for we have but one wire for all purposes. Telegrams have to be sent through Biela, because the Tirno office does not possess Roman characters.

Abdul Kerim Pasha has been dismissed, but the name of his successor is not certainly known here. Whoever he may be, he has lost no time in moving, and the Grand Duke is aware that the garrison of Widdin may be expected on our flank. I have decided to go in that direction, unless more important news should call me to the left, where the Czarewitch is vainly tempting the army of Rustchuk to come out and fight. Yesterday afternoon, therefore, I started for Biela, the imperial headquarters, and arrived here at 6 a.m., having left a horse broken down at Kossova, with the dull Bulgar I had found at Tirno.

It is seldom that an old traveller feels helpless and desperate, but I was almost miserable in that anomalous village Biela. Not a soul could I find

so early in the morning who spoke any language besides Russian and Bulgar. Up and down the filthy byways, which may not be called streets, because there are no shops in them, nor lanes, because there are no trees—up and down, round and about, crossing the hideous puddle of a stream six times, and climbing as often its foul banks, for an hour I led my tired horse about, seeking the imperial headquarters, or else an inn, and finding neither. The throng of carriages laid up in every compound of a certain quarter, and the scarlet shirts of Circassians in undress, told me that the Emperor must be near. But I looked vainly for a house in which he could possibly have taken shelter, or for a garden where his tent might be pitched. At length a gentleman in broadcloth and high boots of patent leather strolled from his quarters to smoke an early cigarette. He pointed out the imperial residence, of which I can only say that its outside reminded me—I know not why exactly—of Mr. Seymour's mews in Duke Street, only it was much less sumptuous. The house had belonged to a Turkish Bey, much esteemed by his neighbours, who, as is said, refused to leave at the approach of the Russians until a Bashi-Bazouk colonel threatened him with

instant death. It appears, indeed, that force was used in several places to make the Mahomedans depart—by their own authorities, of course. Upon inquiry at the door I learned with dismay that General Strukoff and the few other gentlemen about the imperial headquarters, whom I know by name, were all absent. General Strukoff had only come to receive his promotion, which quickly follows merit in the field. Having already the Cross of Saint George for his extraordinary march to Barboshi at the outset of the war, he is made a general for acts of remarkable courage in the battle of the Schipka Pass. The troops could not but be encouraged by the coolness of this fine soldier, who walked his English mare about the hill among them, smiling and well dressed as if at a review.

Failing to discover friends at Court, I had another weary search for the inn, which when found at length offered actually nothing but bare walls—no furniture of any sort, no servants, no fire, no water. Such an inn was never beheld. The old woman who owned it came from a hiding-place at my persistent shouting; but she only stared, shook her head desperately and wrathfully, appealed with indignation to powers unseen, like Boadicea, and

vanished. I gave that up, and set myself to catch little boys. They are very, very stupid, but not quite so much so, perhaps, as their elders. One or two I induced to understand that my horse wanted food; but they declared with energy that nothing remained in town for man or beast. Then I tried to buy from passing Circassians, bent beneath their load of hay, but those imperial warriors laughed pleasantly, and scorned my rouble. My poor horse, who had carried me so well for eighty miles, and who had forty miles farther to do in the two days, was starving. I went into a baker's and bought six loaves of black bread, on which horse and man breakfasted. Then sallying out, I made the great vow not to return without hay, and behold, I met Colonel Wellesley, who took me and mine into his comfortable Turkish house, and restored our courage.

In the rush for quarters at Biela—the which for silent ferocity and desperate politeness could be matched only by those primeval struggles which Mr. Darwin has vaguely suggested—Colonel Wellesley had secured a Turkish house. It was clean, neatly whitewashed, mysterious in its entrances and exits. Little cupboard-rooms turned up where most unlikely, and after several weeks' residence my host did not

feel sure that the vanished owner might not be overlooking him in natural irritation from some coign of vantage. Your Turk is a creature of imagination, and loves not to dwell before all men's sight. He likes to have shady holes and corners where to dream, though means or inclination may forbid him to keep a harem. It is curious, by-the-bye, that in all my explorations I found but one such retreat—that I have described at Tirnova—which distantly resembled our notion of the thing. The *gynæceum* of the ordinary Turk must be partitioned only by a curtain from the rest of the house, and must have two small rooms at most. But such an arrangement would not accord with the Prophet's command upon the subject, nor with the ideas of propriety so strong in the Moslem wife. Are we to conclude that among Bulgarian Turks not one in a hundred kept more than a single spouse? That is my own belief, and that I should have ventured to predict before visiting the country, from a general experience of the Mahomedan world. But one would fain cease this inquiry, out of regard for the luckless Turkophobe. He has really been hit too hard. His Bulgar now turns out such a very dirty crow, his ravishing Turk proves to be the ravished, his Russian ermine has

developed innumerable spots; if the polygamous Moslem be admitted to have but one wife, what food would remain for his rapacious anathema?

My poor horse was easily bestowed in one of the chambers, and Colonel Wellesley's servant was so obliging as to show me the road thither twice, for fear I should never again be able to discover my animal in case he were suddenly ordered off. It is really a marvel how those Turks contrive to make a labyrinth in the space of forty feet square. There stands a little church in France, somewhere, the pavement of which is so dexterously entangled that if a man follow the pattern he must walk two miles and a half to reach the altar. Somewhat of this kind were the passages of Colonel Wellesley's dwelling.

After the Emperor's dinner, whilst I wrote in my shirt sleeves, General Ignatieff strolled in to make my acquaintance. He would not hear of ceremony, and collarless, cravatless, I was presented to the great diplomatist. I saw a man of that complexion which the French call *roux;* we have no word equivalent in English. I conceive that "ruddy" may once have borne the same meaning, but it has now come to signify no more than a red and healthy

skin. But we have the complexion, though we lack a name for it. The *homme roux* has dark hair tinged at the tips and underneath with red, a skin reddening at brows and nostrils, marked likewise by a vague splash of colour here or there. The eyes that complement this tone are always dark, rather tight, shot with sparks of hazel, eyebrows and moustache dark also with red tinges. There never was a handsome man of this complexion, and it is simply fatal to woman.

General Ignatieff is not a witty nor an amusing man. His laugh is ready, supplementing and indicating his own jests, which are purely "objective," as a German colleague put it. He has a gush of words extraordinary in a diplomatist, but quite paralleled by various persons with whom I deal occasionally. The eye described seems to be always watching, a peculiarity of its colour and shape;—but in the case of General Ignatieff, I am quite ready to believe that there is more than an accident of physics in it. No one so unimportant that the general would not care to persuade him; no one so unsympathetic that the General would not have his good opinion. Above all, if report be credible, he seeks the good opinion of English people—not singular in

this, for it is the desire of all Russians who know enough to judge.

When in Statira or Roxana—Colonel Wellesley has neglected to provide for his literary friends a copy of the old dramatists—when somebody wanted to give an idea of Alexander's conversation, Mr. Rowe could recollect no more of her remarks than the line, "And then he talked—ye gods, how he did talk!" The description has been called flat, but the lady was not a "picturesque" reporter. Anyway, I know not how to better it for my purpose. The General talked of English life, Turkish politics, Russian strategy, Bulgar ethics, the prospects of the campaign, the conditions of peace, the motions of the heavenly bodies, Don Carlos, the force of destiny, and Midhat Pasha. That is the "King's Head" of his discourse. Whatever the subject, Midhat Pasha comes in. All would be pleasant in a world wherein the General took the chair, were it not for this offensive meddler. He lies at the bottom of all mischief, for without his interference Turkey would have gone, as smoothly and pleasantly as could be—to the dogs. I know nothing of Midhat Pasha. He may be, as things have turned out, a hero, or, possibly, a traitor. But of General Ignatieff's scheme one perforce has

shaped an opinion to oneself, and when he shows such extreme hostility towards Midhat, one can only think that Midhat was an obstacle of some sort. It is not clever in a diplomatist to reveal his enmities so freely.

Actually, I can recall no more from an hour's conversation in the twilight, than words. "Ye gods, how he did talk!" Appeared the great Alexander in such guise? If so, Statira was judicious in leaving his great talk a mystery.

Biela is a terrible place at any time, but to the stranger and pilgrim, alone and wearied, it recurs in memory like some shocking dream. Smells and dogs are its most prominent characteristics. The Emperor is known to be a good-tempered man, but he must have angelic patience to endure the plagues of Biela. I do not remember to have mentioned that there are no sanitary arrangements in the Russian army. Wherever a force encamps the reek of it goes down the wind. But there are few stations so evil-smelling as Biela, and none where curs, half-wild, make such an awful noise.

It is no use writing the military intelligence which I gathered, since it was telegraphed to you the same night. There appeared to be some objec-

tion to my going to Plevna by the upper road, and after but a few hours' experience of travel without an interpreter, I was not anxious to go farther. There is another road from Tirno, and I resolved to fall back thither.

Nowhere in the world are there people so incredibly dull of comprehension as these Bulgars. The most obvious of consequences does not occur to their minds. For instance, they bring water on demand, but no glass, or the empty glass and no liquid; they bring a plate, but no food—a knife and fork, but no plate—I speak of one's servants, of course. It took me five minutes to make one man in a whole crowd comprehend that I wanted a restive horse held whilst I drank, though they saw me try again and again, and saw the water spilt all over my chest and saddle. Signs are perfectly unintelligible to them; they knit their heavy brows and breathe hard, and look at one another, but understand not a bit. Their Russian "brothers" give them up.

At the Grand Duke's they talk only of war; at the Emperor's only of peace. He is most anxious to negotiate at once, for fear of greater complications. But, as say Russian officers aloud, the case

is no longer in our Emperor's hands. That is just the question. Whether or not at present the nation, and more especially the army, can dictate when and how peace shall be made, it is certain that, if reverses come, the Sovereign's hand will be forced. Already the highest combatant officers are declaring that Constantinople must be occupied for twenty-four hours, and that a grand service must be held in the Mosque of Saint Sophia. An immense banquet is arranged for the 22nd of August, old style, 3rd of September of our calendar; that is to say, bets have been laid throughout the army for the payment of a grand dinner on that day in Constantinople. Not a soldier doubts that he will march into the metropolis of the infidel, and officers angrily resent the mere suggestion that peace should be made elsewhere. These signs, which daily grow more visible, cause a natural alarm among the Emperor's civil advisers. They know, as soldiers do not, the ruinous cost of this war, and the risk of its extension. They dreaded from the beginning just the very explosion that has happened. And before it bursts and destroys everything, they wish to put out the fire by vigorous means. If it be possible to make peace with the aid of England and

Austria, it will be made at once. As for the effect of the announcement upon the army, that is an interesting matter to speculate upon. I do not myself think that the mass will be angry, but amongst officers there will be extreme indignation. Things may change, however, and it may even turn out that we are selling the lion's skin too early.

As far as I can see there are no signs whatever of an immediate attack upon Rustchuk. Yesterday the Grand Duke Vladimir pushed a strong reconnaissance as far as the railway without encountering an enemy. He destroyed a bridge, and retired unmolested.

General Ignatieff has this evening given me details of the late severe repulse at Plevna. A regiment of Cossacks in advance of the Russian column entered the town early in the morning, and disarmed the Mussulman population. In the afternoon of the same day twenty thousand Turks, under Osman Pasha, from Widdin, arrived near the town.

The Cossacks having leisurely strolled forward, towards Lovcha, left the place unguarded. General Schilder-Schulden's brigade was following them, in trust that its advance was protected. Suddenly a

destructive fire was opened upon it, and after a gallant struggle the brigade, unable to open out into line of battle, was forced to retreat.

This is General Ignatieff's account of the affair, and it agrees perfectly with what I have myself seen of the extreme rashness and want of caution characterising Russian movements. Our column in its advance to Tirnova, and afterwards to Gabrova, showed an entire neglect of military precaution. It might have been surprised and destroyed by a very inferior force commanded by an active and energetic leader. But as long as Turkish armies are at Plevna on one flank and at Rustchuk and Shumla on the other, the Russians ought not to venture upon any farther advance.

Much indignation is felt in this place at the persistent rumours of Turkish victories here, whereas, in fact, the Turks fell back from their position at the bridge immediately the Russians appeared and opened fire.

In regard to Russian afrocities I have seen nothing worse than plunder upon the part of the troops. With regard to the Bulgarians, however, the case is quite different. They are capable of any outrage whatever, provided only that it can be committed

without risk. I know that they have murdered great numbers of Turks, and do not doubt that they have done worse. A peasantry who in broad daylight, before a crowd of lookers-on, could deliberately strip the dead, and then leisurely fold and take away the hideous rags, stiff with blood, are not to be restrained by any impulses of humanity. They are now armed with the plunder of Turkish camps and the weapons taken from the Mussulman population. The Russian officers do not interfere with them, although they view their proceedings with disgust.

Great anxiety is felt here as to the attitude of England, in view of the rapid advance of the Russian army, and especially the passage of the Balkans.

The position of Colonel Wellesley is now quite satisfactory. Every one treats him with marked consideration.

SELVIE, *Thursday, July* 26.

News—false—reached the Grand Duke last night of the taking of Lovcha by the new Turkish commander, and of his march upon Selvie. I have come here to see this most important engagement, for if the

enemy break through here there will be "racing and chasing indeed." Of all that you will be advised by telegraph. I have only to add that this is the town —and a very neat little town also—of which I lately wrote that wherever the Bashi-Bazouk might be reported falsely, one could not doubt that he had been in Selvie. I am really almost ashamed to say that the miscreant has vanished again, like a Snark or a Boojum. I expected to behold a scene of misery, but instead thereof is the brightest little place I have visited in Bulgaria, comparatively clean and comfortable, with an excellent little inn of its sort, busy little shops, pretty white houses, flowers—an extraordinary contrast to Tirno, Gabrova, and the rest. The Bashi-Bazouk, as I am now assured, is really playing his fantastic pranks twenty-eight kilometres farther on, but in which direction my informants are not perfectly agreed. If I had not seen myself such awful horrors on that bleak hillside looking down on Schipka, I should begin to laugh heartily at these Bashi-Bazouks, who are always so busy at twenty-eight kilometres distance, and who pass away like the rainbow when one approaches.

In a conversation which I enjoyed with General Ignatieff at Biela, he let me perceive how anxious

he is to get the struggle finished. For an enthusiastic diplomat the appeal to arms is an outrage upon common-sense and propriety. He vanishes from the scene, and loud-tongued soldiers take his place. The sooner arms yield to their intellectual superior the better. The General spoke of the Mahomedan exodus with vexation. It upset the plans of the government, besides inflicting great misery upon the exiles, and temptation most undesirable upon their Christian neighbours. I was told that Bulgarians of the better class, as well as Russians, desire ardently to associate the Turks with themselves in the future government. Said General Ignatieff, "Whenever we have been able to catch a Turk, we have thrust him into the Provisional Committee." This is quite correct. Only three remained at Sistova, and all are appointed. In this little town there are abundance of Mahomedans—perhaps a third of the population—going quietly about their business without annoyance. The exodus is evidently ceasing. All the way from Tirno here I have met three Turks for one Bulgar. They work in the fields side by side with a black phantom whom they call wife. Officers tell me they are extremely

polite, and apparently peaceful, showing gratitude for what is accorded them. But opinion is unanimous that they will not stay under their altered circumstances. Family by family they are expected to slip away in peace. I do not know how this may prove to be, but it seems probable.

Half the Bulgars one meets are armed now, many of them with English Enfields and some with the Martini-Henry. Moslems are more or less disarmed.

On my way here I passed Bolwan, a village named in the Turkish circular as one of the spots where outrage and murder were committed by the Bulgars. My route did not take me through it, but I saw enough to rouse curiosity, and stopped. The settlement had been large, containing perhaps two hundred and fifty cottages—the official enumeration made four hundred. Of these the greater part were inhabited by Turks. Fine harvests encircled the place, rolling in waves from the high ground about to a stretch of turf surrounded by orchards and houses. Several broad roads traversed the village. I wandered all about it. Where a Turkish house had stood amongst its fruit-trees, charred posts, black rafters, heaps of ashes, lay on the

ground. Here and there, but seldom, the quaint framework of the dwelling partly remained, whilst the very beams had often vanished, leaving no more than a foot-deep layer of charcoal. Even the orchards had been burnt or hacked. A few sodden rags lay about the weed-grown path, and a score of dogs, abandoned and starving, skulked among the ruins. The Bulgarian huts were unharmed, of course. Behind one of them I saw two Cossack ponies tied; their masters left the wine-pot and came to stare at me with a kind of swaggering curiosity.

Returning to my waggon I found there half a dozen Bulgars, who said that the Turks had come back. My courier soon found two or three, tall, spare, bold-eyed fellows, looking men indeed, and honest men, amongst the little crowd. They wore the fez, with a wisp of stuff round it, but in other respects were dressed like the Bulgars. Having dismissed the latter, I invited the Turks to tell what had happened to them. They spoke quietly and gravely in their own language, which my groom perfectly understood. But after various questions and answers, he flatly refused to interpret—in so many words declined to tell me what these poor fellows said. I gave him a kick and sent him to his friends, whilst

my courier sought for a Mussulman who spoke Bulgar. Presently arrived one of the most superbly beautiful types of humanity that was ever created, out of marble; I never beheld such a face. With modest ease this Antinous offered me a cigarette and stood attentive. He might be twenty-five years old or so. The other Turks listened with grave and self-respectful decorum.

A hundred houses had been destroyed, he said; there might be a few more, but not less. He did not know why some dwellings had been spared. He himself had gone before the outbreak, escorting his mother and sisters to Trojan when the Russians marched upon Tirnova. His father had remained, and he came back to seek him after placing them in safety; the old man had vanished, but there was reasonable hope that he had escaped. Most of the women and children got away in time, and some men; those remaining had to fly for their very lives. The Bulgars rose in the night, many hundreds of them, for all the country round sent its quota of scoundrels. There was no time to organise defence, for each hut was attacked by half a dozen or more. All the Turks who failed to cut their way through were tossed into the flames, but it could not be known how many

perished. Scarcely any women or children escaped. When the Russians began to send reconnoitring parties out, the corpses were hidden by the Bulgars, and the evidence of their foul deeds cleared away as much as possible. I asked if any Cossacks had a hand in this business; the answer was emphatic, that no Russian had come near the place at that time.

TIRNOVA.

Finding Selvie in no immediate danger I returned to this place, since further progress on that road was stopped by the Turkish scouts. It was well I did so, for a serious movement of the enemy is taking place; and as General Skobeleff did not retire along the highway, but drew off to a village, I should possibly—and even probably—have ridden into a horde of Tcherkess. This morning two inhabitants of Lovcha brought news that nine battalions of infantry and six batteries had entered the town, coming from the southward. General Skobeleff withdrew his regiments of Cossacks as directed, and then, according to report, the Turks massacred every Bulgarian who fell into their hands.

This evening the rumour of the occupation was confirmed officially. We may, therefore, credit

that the attack on our right flank has seriously begun. I can still believe, however, that all this really covers the retreat south, the most practicable road leading by Plevna and Lovcha. If it be true that there are now twenty-five battalions at the former place, reinforced by nine at the latter, there is a very respectable force on our right flank. Colonel Lippinsky will hold the most important post of Selvie to his last man, and will certainly give time to send reinforcements. A serious engagement may be expected hourly.

The Turkish victory at Plevna was more important than has been represented. The Russians are very chary of admitting their loss, but it is rumoured that Schulden's brigade was decimated. Again and again it charged with the bayonet, capturing positions at an awful sacrifice, which the numbers of the Turks obliged them to yield.

Colonel Hassenkampf informs me that certain journals have described Russian atrocities at Tirnova, that Turks have been burned in a mosque there. To these stories I can give personal contradiction. The few Turks who remain are here now, unmolested, and no mosque has been burned. The Turks who left had gone before the place was taken.

The Grand Duke is vexed and astonished that General Krüdener, who commands the Ninth Corps operations against Plevna, has not yet attacked it. Outsiders, however, can see a thousand excuses for him. He is confidently expected to fight to-day. General Gourko reports that the Bulgarians have massacred many thousand Turks beyond the Balkans, and hence the rumours of massacres at Lovcha and Plevna take a more substantial shape. Troops coming from the south would be aware how their own people had been treated, and their countrymen would tell them of the plunder, the burnings, and the murders to which they have been subjected. The Grand Duke has telegraphed to the Emperor that decisive operations are at hand, that the result lies with God.

Sunday, July 29.

The Turks are moving at length "with a vengeance," as the population of Lovcha and Plevna know to their miserable cost.* But it is still

* I do not alter these words that I may now enphatically contradict them. When Lovcha was retaken, the Bulgars mustered in all their vile force, and straightway began to plunder and assassinate those who had abstained from injuring them. It will doubtless prove to be the same case at Plevna when, if ever, the Russians march into that stronghold.

possible that they are not really "becoming offensive," as a lady strategist once put the case. If their demonstrations be intended to cover a retreat across the Balkans, by Trojan and the passes to the west, they would still have been conducted in precisely the same manner. With all the admiration which one must feel for the soldierly qualities of this army, I cannot forbear to criticise the system under which affairs could come to this awkward pass. The broad fact is that whilst we pushed forward headquarters to this place, seized the passage of the Balkans, cut the railway fifty miles beyond, and carried through other gallant enterprises, all the time we had failed to secure the main road on our right flank. After the fall of Nicopolis, seeing no Turks near, we left this most important business to be performed at leisure, and rode forward like knight-errants. Even when the Turks unexpectedly fell into the places which we should have occupied long before, a week passed before we could attack them. This is a strange condition of things. I cannot but set down a few reflections arising from it.

Riding from Gabrova to Biela I received news of the first battle at Plevna. The first pre-occupation at headquarters was to discover whence the attack-

ing troops came, and it was speedily found out that they formed part of the Widdin army. Next the question rose whether the movement was a real attack in flank or a retirement upon Philippopolis and Adrianóple by Trojan. The high road goes from Plevna, by Lovcha, to Selvie and Tirnova; but the road to Trojan branches off at Lovcha, going due south. In either case, therefore, the Turks must occupy Lovcha; but, if withdrawing, they would leave Selvie on their flank, covered by the demonstration.

As to numbers, it seems sufficiently well ascertained that there were thirty battalions at Plevna—a larger force than could have been expected from Widdin. The idea prevails that the armies of Nisch and Sofia had been sent, in part at least, to Widdin. But the force at Sofia was not less, I believe, than thirty battalions, and if it has gone north there must be many more Turks coming down than are expected, for Nisch is said to be stripped of troops. The refugees from Lovcha declare that the army which attacked them came from the south, but they do not find credence.

Three days before the occupation, Cossacks reported to the Grand Duke a movement from Plevna

towards Lovcha. The most active scouts and the most intelligent generals may mistake, however, and the Turks may have come both ways. Whether the armies of Nisch and Sofia had or had not joined the Widdin army before it attacked Plevna, it is universally believed that they are on the march, except by those who obstinately credit that all the Turks are withdrawing to Adrianople. My news from Lovcha to-day speaks of forty battalions there, but I place no reliance upon that number. A few days or hours will tell us.

Upon this side, General Krüdener, commandant of the Ninth Corps, has it in hand to attack Plevna. He received instructions to fight at any cost on Thursday last, but he has not yet obeyed, and the Grand Duke is angry. So did we receive instructions to attack the Schipka Pass at all hazards, and several hundred fine fellows lost their lives. General Krüdener is granted for his purpose the Schilder-Schulden Division of his own corps, which was dreadfully cut up at Nicopolis and again at Plevna; a division of the Eleventh Corps which was lying close behind this place; and a division of the Fourth Corps, which has but just crossed the Danube.

Three days is not half allowance for such move-

ments. Then it is certain that the ammunition of those troops engaged at Nicopolis and Plevna must be exhausted. Russian guns are followed by two caissons, and time would be needed to collect the necessary stores. The Grand Duke has sent four staff officers to General Krüdener—one to report when the battle begins, one to report its progress, one its result, and one to spare. He momentarily expects to see a Cossack galloping up with the first of these communications, which will tell that the General is moving.

It seems very strange, certainly, that such delays should be needed as soon as the Turks show fight. Russian plans were made apparently for a straightforward advance, trampling the enemy before them; and not finding much resistance the troops have gone on rather blindly, at a much greater pace than their numbers or their means of communication justify. The second bridge over the Danube is not yet begun, so far as I can gather, and the cause of delay is quite well known. There are not pontoons enough forthcoming to build it. We are still dependent, therefore, upon the one original bridge for backward and forward traffic until the despised Roumanians make one of their own at Rahova. Droll

it is to mark the anxiety with which this feat of engineering is expected. Men as well as materials have been miscalculated. I am informed on good authority that two more *corps d'armée* have been or will be ordered to mobilise immediately.

There was ample warning of the attack on Lovcha. Besides a suggestive report from the neighbourhood that it had already been seized, Turkish scouts had appeared upon the road to Selvie when I reached that village. In consequence I went no farther, for which self-restraint I am now grateful. General Skobeleff, in retiring from his post, drew off the road, and it is almost certain that if I had proceeded I should have fallen into the midst of Bashi-Bazouks, mad with blood. But Colonel Lippinsky would have refused me permission to go, no doubt, had I asked it. The peril in which Lovcha stood was very well known, but our lack of men forbade the despatch of a battalion to protect it. Colonel Lippinsky, it may now be told, had one regiment and one battery of eight guns to defend Selvie. There was not a soldier behind him as far as this, though nine-tenths of the population are Mahomedan, enraged by the burning of their houses, crops, and orchards. Woods stretch from the road itself over the hills, far

down on the other side, and, the gravest point of all, an excellent road upon the left conducts direct to Gabrova in five hours, whilst we, at this point, are eight hours distant, and our road is blocked with trains. I ventured to ask a staff officer if he thought it impossible that active troops might push through the woods here, relying on the sympathy of the people, and dash at Gabrova. He replied that it was certainly possible, but that Turks would not do it.

That is the explanation always offered. We know our enemy, Russians say, and we take these liberties with him. I have no doubt at all that, with numbers anything like equal, say two to three, our troops would carry off the victory. But there should be no such excitement when the Turks use a most ancient and well-worn form of strategy. One might almost think they had invented a new machine of war. The reason is, of course, that we have gone too fast and too carelessly.

At this moment of writing a regiment has just reached Selvie, coming from Gabrova. Colonel Lippinsky has gone to support the Cossacks half-way to Lovcha, and Selvie has remained defenceless for many hours between his departure and the new-

comers' arrival. There was no danger, of course, but the dispositions seem faulty which allow such gaps. We have been making warfare in Cossack style, dashing at a point, grasping it, and passing beyond.

It is well to observe the case of Plevna as it was explained to me by General Ignatieff. A Cossack regiment arrives, finds no resistance, disarms the Moslem population more or less, and passes on triumphantly to Lovcha. Presently arrive the Turks, who also meet no resistance, and comfortably establish themselves. Then turns up a brigade of Russian infantry, who, instead of standing to be attacked—in a town already occupied, as they think, and counted as their own—have to attack an enemy intrenched, and are beaten. A colonel of Cossacks, gentle and gigantic as a hero of chivalry, said to me in his tent the other day, "We have no spies, and we invite no treachery. We know our cause is just, and we confide in Heaven and our swords." This is fine, as an antique sentiment. But the spy would have saved many hundred lives and suffering untold at Plevna, not to mention the thousands of Bulgarians who are said to have been massacred. A few score of Cossacks keeping a bright look-out would have perceived the movement from Widdin; and had the

Plevna road been occupied, the Turks would have had to attack instead of Russians. The long delay of General Krüdener in moving can be explained, I think, but not, in a certain sense, be justified. If he cannot be ready in a week, somebody or something is in fault.

When an army is marching to the attack filled with those thoughts that strike the least fanciful as the most poetic at such a moment, young soldiers are invariably astounded to observe the peasants toiling in their fields along the march, women performing their household duties, and all the little life of the country at its daily round, just as if hale men were not going past to die, and peasants were not risking all upon the venture. But the husbandman is right. What can he do to affect the issue, and how will he help towards his own protection by sitting stupefied indoors or feverishly following the troops? So in some sense it is with me just now. Fighting I must report by telegraph when it comes, but in the meanwhile I had best occupy myself with the every-day matters of life.

First as to the word Tirnova. It is to be remarked that in all names ending in *ova* the last syllable is dropped by Bulgarians, as in all words spelled

itza the penultimate syllable is lost. Tirnova, Gabrova, become Tirno, Gabro; Sarevitza becomes Saréva, and so on. I know not why maps should thus falsify the pronunciation in places that have no historical existence. But the geographers are more eccentric still. Most of the important settlements —towns you can scarcely call them—have a Turkish and a Bulgarian name; Austrian charts add a third of their own. Thus the village of which we shall certainly hear a great deal soon—Lovcha—has its Turkish name, which I do not recollect, and another on the maps, Lovatz. Perhaps this is not a good instance, for the Bulgarians call it as often by one appellation as the other, but it serves to exemplify what I am saying.

The peasant does not know what you mean by Tirnova, and the townsman never uses that form. His forefathers called their dwelling-place Tirno, and so does he. Possibly the records of the "Bulgarian Kingdom," misty, not musty—for I suspect them of very late fabrication—recognise their ancient capital as Tirnova; another syllable may well be thought to add dignity. But the people, very healthily indifferent as yet to fine distinctions of the sort, call it as their fathers called it.

It is a fearful place. The word *amusement* has never yet been heard within its precincts, the word *eat* is used in its rudest and most brutal form, the word *walk* is recognised in its breakneck streets as an expression for the bastinado, or torture of the feet. A mere skeleton is human life here, "sans eyes, sans nose, sans teeth, sans everything." There is nothing but horrors to see, to smell, to taste, to feel, or to suffer. One dead level of sordid dulness is the life of Tirno.

Slavophils attribute this to the crushing weight of the Turk. I think not. Servia has not felt the Turk for many years, and is as wretched; Roumania, a Latin country, abounds with enjoyment. Talking with a distinguished officer at Selvie two nights ago, about the crass stupidity of these Bulgars, he said frankly, "Ask your interpreter if our peasants are not equally dull of comprehension." Dulness, then, appears to be confessed as a characteristic of Slav blood, but I cannot easily think that anywhere it reaches such a point as here.

Russians, not a patient race, at least in the grade of officers, are bitterly eloquent upon the ugliness of woman and the stupidity of man in Bulgaria. The people work as no others work, I think, because no

other people have lives so utterly blank. Conceive existence without one hour's amusement, rational or irrational, from cradle to grave! Such it is at Tirno. Since the Russian camp has been here, a certain vague form of promenade has risen up. The very plain and homely fashion of this capital strolls along the main street of booths and tents, timorously glancing inside, and giggling when a handsome officer makes some responsive signal. The elders of the party do not giggle by any means, for to tell truth Tirno is greatly shocked and confused by its liberators. They have a bold way of staring into those upper windows where young women sit, such as had been hitherto unknown in Tirno. They even smile, take off their flat caps, and are credibly reported to have kissed their hands in passing when some demoiselle not positively hideous looked down upon them. They laugh loud, too, and upon the smallest provocation will address a lady gaily. They do not go to bed at sunset. In short, their ways are scandalous, and Tirno opines that if such are the manners of Europe, Europe should be ashamed of herself. But the inhabitants cannot resist the temptation of a newly discovered enjoyment. The ways of civilised life are wonderful to

them—I hope they may be instructive. They think that now the Turk is gone they also, in an instant, will become European, and rival the most advanced. I do not see the argument of it. The Turk did not make them dirty or stupid.

Looking through my window to-night I see a prospect which would be beautiful indeed were it not burnt up. Fifty feet sheer beneath me are the roofs of another street, with fruit-trees and low acacias in each little compound; a stone dropped from my window would fall upon the tiles. Still lower than this, beneath another headlong cliff, stands a third tier of houses on the water bank. The stream here makes a bend so sharp that its high rocky promontory is not ten yards broad at the point. The farther shore, flat for a space of fifty yards inland, is covered with willows and acacias, beyond which cliffs rise like a grey wall. From these the ground slopes upwards still to the Russian camp.

Yet higher across the road stands a little copse, where an electric light gleams among the trees to tell the Grand Duke's quarters. Bare downs winding and overlapping, wooded hills, slopes green and yellow with cultivation, make a panorama such as lazy painters would abhor to sketch in detail; whilst

beyond, in each small break of the encircling chain, misty blue mountains fill up the gap. Day and night the river murmurs, tumbling over a weir, beneath my house; day and night, but especially at this hour, frogs twitter and croak in such a chorus that one must speak loud to be heard above their din. The sound is not quite that to which we are used in England—much longer sustained and more musical, but a nuisance incomparably greater.

There are worse noises in Tirno, however. Lo! a gentleman, inspired by the moonlight, has struck up the Bulgarian hymn. While looking over the prospect I have described, he has the audacity to intone his national songs. We have all been told that the Bulgarian ballads are quite unequalled by anything later than the Homeric series. It may be so; I would not give an opinion on a subject of which I know nothing. But there is a very old French proverb, "*A beau mentir qui revient de loin,*" and I feel the utmost suspicion of those critics and translators who tell us marvels of an unknown tongue. I once met a *savant* who declared that the Nahual dialect of the Tolteo speech was or is—for I know not—the most perfect form of language; and I rigorously abstained from arguing the point.

But a man can hear when he cannot understand; and though the gentleman next door be reciting words that burn, I say, Give me the frogs! I would fain cry to him, "Silence, and let us hear the sweet harmonies of the Batrachian!" I do not recollect to have suffered from such prolonged and inexorable music of the nose since I cruised in the China seas. The "Herr Professor," of whom you may remember to have heard at Paratchin during the war last year, could out-howl most dogs on a moonlight night, when a sufficient crowd of admirers excited him to his best nasal "stop." But my unknown Bulgarian could beat him by a nose. I shall go to bed and dream that I am whipper-in to a large pack on a shiny night.

July 30.

We are still awaiting news of General Krüdener's attack on Plevna, which is unaccountably delayed. Even making every allowance for his difficulties in collecting the troops assigned to him, with their necessary ammunition and stores, he should at latest have attacked yesterday.

I was dissuaded from attempting to join him on Friday by the assurance that I should arrive too

late, and miss alike the news and the forward march of headquarters, but nothing was done up to last night, and great irritation prevails in consequence.

The Roumanian division which crossed at Nicopolis is making a bridge. It is droll that the Russians after all should be indebted to the Roumanians for thus doubling their means of communication. The Grand Duke has thanked Prince Charles for the work executed by his men. After establishing the bridge the Roumanian forces will go to Widdin.

Bulgarian volunteers begin to come forward at last; boys from twelve years old and upwards have been parading the streets to-day, following flags and chanting Bulgarian hymns. They are to be drafted into the army, but the experience of the Russian officers forbids them to expect much of these levies.

Considerable numbers of the Bulgarians who are alleged to have acted as spies for the Turks have been brought in.

Not less, probably, than fifteen hundred prisoners from the garrison of the Schipka Pass have been brought in, with some score of Bashi-Bazouks, of whom numbers are accused of terrible crimes.

The Russians treat the prisoners with good-natured contempt, but do not prevent the Bulgarians from

kicking and mercilessly using them, even in the streets of this town. We can but guess what these prisoners must have suffered in the long march through which the Bulgarians had charge of them.

BULGARENI, *August* 3.

General Krüdener attacked on the 30th and was utterly defeated. Had Osman Pasha taken the offensive immediately after the battle all are agreed that he might have inflicted a most serious disaster upon the Russians. The fight at one time, however, appeared to be going favourably for them, for General Schakoffskoi on the left took all the positions until nearly up to the town, whilst General Skobeleff the younger, on the extreme left, passed with his Cossack cavalry between Plevna and Lovcha, and even entering the town. He stayed but a few minutes, however. But General Krüdener on the right made no progress. Late in the afternoon the Turks, bringing up their troops, suddenly took the offensive, and rapidly pushed the Russians from all the positions they had won, hurling them back with a slaughter variously estimated at from five to ten thousand men.

In the opinion of all military critics there is very grave cause of complaint in reference to all

the arrangements for attack. A general confusion appears to have reigned, details were altogether neglected, and no arrangements whatever were made for retreat, the contingency of a repulse not appearing to have been contemplated for an instant by General Krüdener. The idea, however, of superseding this general, although warmly debated, has been rejected at headquarters.

The Turkish position now forms the segment of a circle covering Plevna, from Gravitza to the Lovcha road. Prince Schakoffskoi lies at Tuschenitza, and thence the Russian army is ranged in a line reaching through Pelischat and Poradin to Turk Testenik.

Osman Pasha has not advanced a mile beyond his position won at the first, when there was nothing whatever to have prevented his advance to the river Osma.

I observe a very great discouragement among the most intelligent officers here. These do not for one instant doubt that the next attack upon Plevna will be crowned with success, but are disheartened at the thoughts that all the plans of the campaign have been overturned, and all this loss and damage suffered entirely from bad management. Plevna should have been seized and fortified weeks ago, in

which case the advance of Osman Pasha from the west would have been impossible. In any case a surprise like that by which General Schilder's brigade suffered so terribly ought to have been impossible had the slightest care been exercised.

The chances of a winter campaign are being seriously discussed here, as it is now very doubtful whether it will be possible to reach Constantinople and carry out the objects of the campaign before the end of the open season.

The whole of the corps of Guards is coming from St. Petersburg at once, and the second and third divisions are already on the road.

We know very little here about the movements of Suleiman Pasha. Some reports have it that a portion of his army has already joined that of Osman Pasha and faces us at Plevna, but, in point of fact, nothing is known for certain upon the subject. Upon all hands, however, it is agreed that the force in front of us cannot be much less than fifty thousand men. The most formidable of the defences of Plevna is a huge redoubt surrounded by a very deep ditch, wherein the Russians were helplessly slaughtered. The health of the army is excellent, none of the anticipated effects of the climate having been experienced.

The general opinion here is that the Turks at Plevna, having by their successful resistance disconcerted all the Russian plans and delayed their advance for a month, would act wisely in withdrawing from their position, leaving only a sufficient force to mask their movements, and should then fall upon General Gourko. They cannot hope to hold Plevna successfully against the force which will be brought against it, nor can they now take the offensive with any hope of success. No one believes, however, that they will evacuate Plevna, but will stop there until surrounded and shot down.

KARAGACH, *August* 5.

The Grand Duke rushed from Tirnova to Biela with astonishing rapidity, leaving at 3 p.m., and arriving in time to dine with the Emperor. The task of warning those officers who follow headquarters was carelessly performed, and not a few of them left their baggage behind. The population of Tirnova watched in blank dismay whilst files of vehicles hurried through their narrow streets, and troops formed upon the hill. Those faded arches of

triumph, and flags still waving though discoloured, must have seemed a deadly mockery when the Russians filed back beneath them.

Of course Tirnova is in no danger, since a whole division of the Eighth Corps lies between the Turk and it upon the right, and behind, the whole Russian army. But the last thing these people could understand would be military affairs, and they fancied the Bashi-Bazouks already in their houses. All who can afford it are meditating escape, and unless measures have been taken to calm them, of which I hear nothing, the Christians of Tirnova have learnt some of those experiences of discomfort which their Moslem fellow-citizens so lately suffered.

It was the same all along our route. I have travelled through a population panic-struck. They think that their deliverers are retiring as they came, unexpectedly, and that the Turks will be allowed to wreak their vengeance. Bulgars know best what they have a right to look for. I pushed before the slow-marching staff; but news of the defeat, and of the Grand Duke's return, had come from the other side. I turned at dusk into a roadside *hahn*, or public-house, where the horses might be fed, though civilised man could neither eat nor sleep.

All through the night Russian officers came up in creaking carts or Bucharest cabs, Cossacks slipped silently past like phantoms, country people who had been requisitioned halted their bullocks, and retailed an awful store of news. Three several times did a servant, horror-stricken, "draw my midnight curtains" to recount some fresh disaster. First he told me, on the authority of a Bulgar, that the Turks had seized a convoy of biscuit at Sistova. I commanded him to bring me no more Bulgar stories. Then he begged permission to state, on the authority of a Cossack, that twenty thousand Russians had fallen, and that the Turks were pursuing. I forbade more Cossack legends. Finally, he could not resist the temptation to inform me, at 2 a.m., that a Russian officer declared the bridge broken. When I refused to hear details of this, he went sleepless to bed in despair.

For all these tales there was a kind of foundation. The escort of a bullock train, conveying biscuit towards Plevna, took fright close by Sistof, and fled into the town with awful outcries and dismay; brigands then looted the waggons. There are always plenty of such in Bulgaria, zealous Christians to a man, and it might prove curious if one could ascertain how many "outrages" and

"atrocities" attributed to the Moslems have been the doing of these ruffians. Fifteen brought into Tirnova by Cossacks some ten days before this last exploit are accused of crimes seldom paralleled.

The bridge has indeed broken by accident; and if Krüdener has not lost twenty thousand men, he has lost the half, and has withdrawn to Bulgareni. It must be said that when the Russian soldier is defeated he owns it with extraordinary frankness, feeling a kind of pleasure in exaggerating his loss. The authorities, however, show quite another spirit.

The panic in Sistof was fearful. All the population snatched up what lay under their hands and made for the river. The breakneck streets were choked with a roaring crowd, fighting its way downward through converging streams. A picket went out at the double to guard the bridge, and it forced a way through the mass with the butt end of its rifles. The sentries at the bridge-head fixed bayonets, and the sailors formed to support them, but many persons got through, by address or bribery. When the picket came up, however, it stood like a wall, with bayonets extended. Thousands behind pushed on the foremost ranks,

and they, screaming, could avoid the steel only by a leap into the river.

It is not known how many were drowned, or how many wounded, but in whispers people talk of a round number. There was farce in the tragedy at which Sistof laughed when it had time to remember. A rich Jew there, a very fat man, had early information. He loaded himself with money-bags, called his son, and bolted. The youth was agile and timorous—he flew, heedless of the paternal outcry. To handicap him for the race his panting sire yielded one by one the money-bags, until he had no more. But all was useless. After each successive "imposition," the youngster regained his lead, and came upon the bridge just as it was closed. One spring and he passed the sentries, nor ceased his wild career until the winning-post was left behind on the Roumanian bank. His father meanwhile choked and fumed, panted and wailed, before the bayonets, crying for his son, his gold, his ducats, and his offspring, like another Shylock.

Leaving Biela early next morning, I waited at Burunli for the Grand Duke. It might have been more comfortable in some senses, certainly more lively, to wait at the imperial residence. But the

unhealthiness of the place was too visible. In one half-hour I met or heard about three officers who were invalided home with fever. All troops had been ordered out of the village, but the smell seems to have become chronic. General Ignatieff I found in terribly bad condition, burning with fever, so I preferred to risk the brigands, and set out.

There are no towns along this route—if, indeed, any settlement worthy that name exists in Bulgaria. Through rolling downs, treeless and parched, runs the track, scarcely worn in places, in others ankle deep in dust. There is much less cultivation, inhabitants are fewer, and villages more wretched than elsewhere. Here tiled roofs disappear wholly, and we see the Roumanian hut, half underground, upon the top of which human beings, donkeys, pigs, and dogs clamber up to survey the scene, or to gossip.

Travelling very slowly, for the staff never goes faster than a walk, with long halts to read despatches carried by a grimy Cossack, we reached Bulgareni on the evening of the 2nd. It is just such a dirty, uninteresting village as I have described, slightly to be remembered by me as the spot where three soldiers tried to rob my interpreter. They entered an inclosure where my waggon stood, and accused

the Bulgar peasant of harbouring Turkish horses. The Bulgar, in great alarm, not apparently unused to such scenes, took them to my follower, who pointed out the official ticket on my waggon. One of the three then said to his companions that they had better leave, for fear of trouble, and he himself did so. The others suddenly denounced my interpreter as a Turkish spy, swore he had sold their regiment and had boasted of the deed, fell upon him, and dragged him out of the gate. There they rifled his pockets, and finding nothing of importance, snatched up a camp-stool he had dropped and ran away full speed. A Bulgar came to warn me of the adventure at a house where I was dining with some fellow-correspondents, and I hastened to lodge a complaint for the recovery of the camp-stool. But it was pitch dark, the lines stand far back from the road, such as it is, and six huge dogs, at least, savage as wolves, guard every compound. It is a real danger to traverse these villages at night, but the peasant gave me a vague report of officers in a hut close by, and I persevered. Suddenly Don Carlos—the real Don Carlos of Spanish fame—emerged from a handsome tent, and most courteously offered his services in anything. Upon learning my misfortune, he wished

to lend me the Cossack placed at his disposal by the Grand Duke, and expressed the utmost sympathy. Don Carlos is attached to the staff, and follows the war with equal interest and good humour. The latter quality is in huge demand, and the supply is almost equal.

I had intended to leave Bulgareni on the evening of the 3rd, but a tremendous storm of wind and rain threatened to make the cross-country roads impassable in darkness. This was annoying, as General Skobeleff the younger proposed a dashing reconnaissance next day, leaving Paradim at 6 a.m., and skirting Plevna with his Cossacks. It would have been a ride worth the trouble of a night journey, and even a little risk. General Skobeleff's design was to unmask the Turkish positions; but the pitchy darkness of the night would make sentries more than usually suspicious—for what honest man, not a soldier, would travel in such a storm?—and my route lay outside all the infantry pickets which edge the road to Paradim. A man journeying that way would be more likely to get a bullet than a billet.

Next day, before dawn, I was off with some companions. We rode by the camp from which I

date my letter, and taking a side path to the left, splashed forward. The country was soaked with last night's rain. The harvest is almost gathered, and miles of stubble border the road, which runs along the hollows. Then again one traverses a zone of bright green maize, just breaking into flower. Always behind, at a little distance, are the rolling downs, yellow and bare. There were heroes once in Bulgaria, and their tombs abound. It chances that a line of such barrows is stretched across the country between Karagach and Paradim, and the Russians naturally utilise it for their sentries. At a long distance we could see the first outpost, a couple of men standing on the ancient mound, intently looking towards Plevna. The picket lay under a few thin acacias behind, whilst their officer apparently "slept the sleep that knows not waking" beneath a hillock of rugs. Courteously leading me to the barrow, he explained that the Turks ought to be about ten versts away in a straight line; but, said he, "you might find them at a distance of six versts, or even," more thoughtfully, "at four. As for Bashi-Bazouks, a Bulgar was attacked over there yesterday, and they cut his hand off. I see no objection to your going farther, and I will send a

soldier to pass you by the pickets." N.B.—I saw the Bulgar in question some hours after. His hand was not cut off, but shot through, and there is no means of telling a Bashi-Bazouk's bullet from that of a Nizam or a maddened peasant.

Pursuing our way after this cheering intelligence, skirting the tumuli, on each of which stood a brace of sentries, we came to a hill covered with brush. Here a Russian coachman suddenly perceived the whole inhabitants of the country side in headlong flight, and, shouting his discovery, he turned to outstrip them. We, riding in front, were brought back at a gallop to hear these tidings, but our best glasses failed to confirm them.

At Paradim we found a brigade of the 32nd Division, about returning to Karagach, a brigade of the 5th, and a battery. The 5th left us at noon and the 32nd at evening, but the 30th did not turn up till some late hour of the night. What troops there were in camp to protect the village I know not, but we slept there without alarm from the enemy. Our horses were carefully tied, with the simplest knots, close by the haystack under which we bivouaced; their saddles on and their bridles handy. Had the Turks come, we should have

had to ride between two fires, for the camp lay above us, outside the village. There was certainly nothing but our revolvers to defend Paradim that night, had the foe made a dash to burn it. Prince Schakoffskoi was absent with General Krüdener; but at morning arrived General Zortoff, commandant of the 4th Division, who paraded a fine body of troops before the arrival of the Grand Duke.

Having missed General Skobeleff's expedition, I hoped to regain Karagach before his Highness should have arrived there from Causmahala. But the same stupid coachman ruined this scheme. Driving headlong into camp whilst we were skirting it on horseback, the sentries at the other side stopped him. We had to follow, but our utmost efforts failed to carry us through until the parade was over. General Zortoff showed extreme courtesy, and passed us through at once when we got speech with him, but the Grand Duke had left this place ten minutes before our arrival. He returns to-night.

Troops are moving in every direction, crossing and replacing each other. On my short tour thus far round the outposts I have met the same soldiers, passed the same, and again repassed them in a manner bewildering. The left wing appears to be

coming up towards the centre, probably to form a reserve. The Minski regiment, which suffered so severely, has fallen back to Bulgareni, and all the divisions engaged in the last affair are to be spared. Prince Schakoffskoi's command moves up here. The Fourth Corps is advancing on the left, and the 32nd Division falling back. The 30th Division, which attacked from the northern road, I left at Paradim; but whether it will remain there, go to the left, or retire to Bulgareni, I cannot tell. Its place on the right is taken apparently by the Roumanian forces. The movement of this army across the Danube is quite serious. Indeed I cannot understand why people laugh at the idea of Roumanians making war. They are men like others, with hands to shoot and bodies to be shot at.

I am riding round the outposts of that army which gathers for the third assault of Plevna. The headquarters are still at Causmahala nominally, but the Grand Duke has visited this place to-day, and has gone on to Paradim, which I left a few hours ago. Causmahala is a tiny village five or six miles behind Bulgareni, just off the high road to Plevna. It is needless to say that there are no houses better than huts in it. All Bulgarian villages are absolutely

alike, and every squalid dwelling is a fac-simile of every other. The Grand Duke holds council under an acacia, and generals eagerly appropriate the pear- and apple-trees around. There is a barrier of cases around each tent strong enough and high enough to resist attack; and horses and carriages form a very labyrinth. The young Grand Duke may be seen stretched upon his august stomach, the centre of a dozen radiating legs, trimly booted, silver spurred. All heads thereto belonging are concentred on the map which his Highness studies and comments upon.

It is no little problem that lies before the Russian generals. Since the first repulse of Schuldener's brigade the enemy's force has daily increased. It is now set down at sixty-five thousand men solidly intrenched. The greater part are regulars, brave and well drilled; the cannon, as all admit, are served with skill. Opinions are still divided whether any part of Suleiman's army from Montenegro has reached Plevna. One officer, who ought to know, assures me that the returning forces are all directed towards Adrianople; whilst a second, of equal authority, declares that of the sixty-five thousand Turks before us twenty thousand belonged to the Montenegro

army. If so, it seems probable that more of those seasoned warriors are coming up. Suleiman himself is certainly not with them, however. If he were, I cannot but think that the besieged would have shown more energy.

After all the doubts, anxieties, and suggestions which I have duly reported, the simple plan decided by the Turks is visible. Some of us expected a bold march across our line of communication, which might easily have been effected. Some looked for a general attack on our right flank, under cover of which a dash for Gabrova and the Schipka Pass might be made by the Selvie road; others, thinking that the Turks would do what true strategy recommends in their desperate situation, supposed that Plevna would be held just long enough to secure the retreat of the Widdin garrison through the Trojan Pass.

But no one thought that the Turks would sit in the place and wait for destiny. No one thought that instead of cutting our line of communication, instead of marching down our flank, where there was but one regiment to oppose them, they would intrench themselves and gather force to challenge the invading army. So sure was every one at headquarters that Plevna must be but one point in a series of operations

that General Krüdener's hesitation in attacking was severely criticised. We looked quite as much towards Lovcha and Selvie as towards the spot destined for renown. The French and Austrian attachés with the army had even gone in that direction after the great repulse had become known, so satisfied were they that there the action would be decided. The Grand Duke declared at his own table that so soon as this annoying business was settled he would dash for Adrianople with two *corps d'armée* on the instant. But the annoying business still drags on, becoming more unpleasant as it goes. Certainly the Turks appear to be acting against all laws of strategy and common sense. It seems evident as noon-day that they must be crushed. But if, in despite of all probability and principle, they should repulse a third attempt to dislodge them, scientific rules must once more give way to obstinate luck and hard fighting power. For, beyond doubt, the Russian campaign will be terribly endangered.

CHAPTER VII.

BEFORE PLEVNA.

PARADIM, *Aug.* 9.

THE Emperor forwarded a letter here yesterday from one of the Turkish prisoners to his parents, describing the kind treatment he is receiving. His Majesty ordered it to be sent on at once. Accordingly Staff-Captain Pellegrini, with two trumpets, two hussars, and a very large white flag, rode towards the outposts of the Turks at Gravitza. He desired also to suggest to the Turkish commander the burial of the dead, who lie in heaps, not having yet been interred, and threaten pestilence. Climbing the hill in front of the position, Pellegrini sounded the trumpets and displayed his flag. The answer came in a fusilade so heavy that he cannot understand his escape. After twice sounding a parley he withdrew, balls pursuing him across the valley. Pellegrini saw dragoons taking deliberate aim at him.

General Zortoff gravely proposed to-day that I

should carry the letter and witness for myself. He offered as many flags and trumpets as I liked. Having seen more than I wished of Turkish brutality in the Schipka Pass, I declined.

One begins to feel oneself out of humanity's reach. I have seen but a single newspaper during the last month, and my freshest letter from home bears date July 3. The doings of the world are unknown to us "before Plevna," and generals may be heard to speculate whether Kars has been taken by assault or capitulated. I could bear with equanimity the lack of news from outside if my own quota of intelligence reached you safely. But it is dull working when a man does not see how his labour is to be turned into profit. What machinery I have for communicating with Bucharest or Orsova must be reserved for the *dignus vindice nodus*—that great catastrophe which all the world is expecting.

The field-post I might easily reach—in fact, it will be established here to-morrow. But I have reason to distrust the field-post. With the best intentions, doubtless, it has contrived to lose or delay every letter sent by an incautious colleague from the front. Complaints abound in the army, and come back from Russia.

The second battle of Plevna does not become more intelligible by the light of further details now to hand. Each general is naturally anxious to exonerate himself as much as possible from a share in the disaster, but the gravest responsibility rests, after all, with those who advised an attack which was hopeless from the beginning. General Krüdener had at Paradim Prince Schakoffskoi with one brigade of the 32nd Division and one brigade of artillery; his outposts stood at Pelichat. At Karagach was General Bojeranoff, with one brigade of the 30th Division; at Tristenik one brigade, that of General Williaminoff, of the 31st Division, the whole of General Schilder-Schulden's 5th Division, with the staff of the Ninth Corps; they advanced to Pelichat. The cavalry division, the 11th, passed the Wid between Tuschenitza and Bogot, and operated on the Sofia road. General Skobeleff, with his Cossacks and a battalion of infantry, came up from the south-west, finding no opposition.

General Krüdener, therefore, had five brigades of infantry, one division of cavalry, and one hundred and twenty-eight guns, besides Skobeleff's command of a battalion and five hundred Cossacks. But all this imposing force mustered barely twenty-five thousand

men. The Russian corps were confessedly weak on crossing the Pruth, but it was said that they would fill up gradually. Instead of filling up they have fallen away at an unaccountable rate. Talking with an officer some days ago, he casually mentioned that the company of two hundred and fifty men is now to be reckoned at one hundred and seventy-five; and such a diminution must be calculated all through. I cannot suggest an explanation. If there be sickness in the army serious enough to account for it, the fact has been hidden with astonishing cleverness. It is true that the 5th Division had been present at Nicopolis and at the first battle here, in both of which engagements it suffered terribly. But after calculating its loss at the highest figure possible, the remaining three brigades must still be thirty-five per cent. beneath their nominal strength. I do not wish to repeat the story of the battle; but there are details worth noting.

General Krüdener, of course, did not wish to attack, but he received imperative orders. Forthwith a council of war assembled, but a council, as I hear, of quite an unusual description. When the generals met he addressed them briefly, pointing out that the enemy's position was very strong, held by superior

forces, and insufficiently reconnoitred. But, he went on, "I have orders to attack, and I am sure you will all do your duty." Thereupon the council broke up, without laying a plan more elaborate than the mere resolve to go straight on as long as possible.

As in the engagements at the Schipka Pass, those who could see and reflect were hopeless from the beginning. They knew that if the Turks should make a stand, the Russian strength was insufficient to dislodge them. Russian courage needs no eulogy at this day. In attack it is as daring as it is stubborn in defence, and never were the fine qualities of this people more conspicuously displayed. The battle began with artillery fire, in which the Turks showed their customary skill. Growing more and more impatient of long-range fighting, Prince Schakoffskoi gave orders to advance. Regiment after regiment along the line pushed forward, with or without orders. Upon the left, the German brigade of the 32nd took the first line of intrenchments, and the Turks, it is said, forsook the second. Two guns were captured and many rifles left on the field.

But in the centre, before the great redoubt at Gravitza, Russian bravery spent itself in vain.

General Bojeranoff dismounted and led his brigade on foot until prostrated by a bullet through his thigh. The number of officers who fell was unparalleled in the bloodiest actions of the Franco-German war, proportionately to the force engaged. But no visible impression was made on the redoubt. Artillery could not be brought to bear upon it—the second line of intrenchments even lay out of range.

It would be useless to deny that the troops are discouraged. They will fight as bravely in the next attack; they will do all that is possible for man. But they do not see how the difficulties of ground are to be overcome. Whether they have lost any part of their confidence in the officers who lead them I cannot tell as yet, but the frankness of speech in a Russian army is more than surprising.

After the centre and right had been repulsed, the enemy recovered courage, and again seized the intrenchments captured from him, with the guns. All along the line there was awful carnage, but Russians never tell their loss. It cannot have been less than six thousand, since that figure is confessed; it may well have been ten thousand, and some who were engaged put it at fifteen. Several men slightly

wounded escaped by feigning death, and crept back to the lines after nightfall. The story they tell is not to be repeated. They said they witnessed the same foul atrocities which shocked us on the top of the Schipka Pass.

When the assault became obviously hopeless it appeared that no arrangements had been made for retreat. The regiments dropped off one by one, retiring to their first station, except the brigade of General Pouzanoff. Having no orders, and unable to learn what others were doing, that general withdrew as far as Bulgareni. By this proceeding he is alleged to have spoilt everything—I know not how—and he is deprived of his command. Altogether it cannot be said that the conduct of the second battle has redeemed the errors of the first, or the mistake of strategy which made both of them needful.

I paid a hasty visit to Nicopolis on the 6th. Finding that all was likely to remain quiet for a time, I went to see what our first friends, the Roumanians, might be about. I found the process of replacing Russian garrisons rapidly progressing. But though the first brigade of the Ronmanian army had already passed beyond the point where

the road from Bulgareni strikes the highway between Nicopolis and Plevna, there were still Russian sentries on the bridge at Turkamil. There also was encamped the advanced guard of the second brigade, and the river was full of bathers, almost as easily distinguished from Russians when undressed as when in uniform, for the Roumanian skin is as dark as that of many Indians. There is a difference, however, greater than dark complexion, black eyes, or handsome feature—a slenderness of build and listlessness of expression which mark the Southerner. I fear the Roumanians are little likely to succeed where Russians have failed.

Nicopolis is partly held by Russian soldiers still, but the withdrawal proceeds. The more one explores of this important fortress, which was scarcely damaged by the bombardment, the more one feels that its surrender needs explanation. Three days before the battle a certain journalist of my acquaintance was warned, not only of its imminence, but of its result. The news reached him from a fair source, with which a grand *seigneur* of Muscovy was not unacquainted. Everything befell as the lady had foretold—my friend arrived to time, and blessed her gift of prophecy. One may interpret the

matter so, or one may suspect that Nicopolis was bought. However it be, the prediction of a little French actress would cost the neck of that high and mighty pasha, could it be set before an unbelieving court of officers at Constantinople. Nature has fortified the place. Three ranges of cliffs, actually unclimbable, crown a series of slopes. Upon the top of every range is level ground, wide enough for cannon to manœuvre. Batteries, large or small, are planted everywhere, and upon the highest crest stands a citadel, ruined it is true, but none the weaker. The ditch on its land side is twenty feet deep, and sheer rock bounds it on the north. Beyond this, one traverses a ponderous archway, beneath a crumbling tower. Far below stretches the Roumanian landscape. The campaniles of Turnu scarcely glitter, so distant do they seem; Flamenda is hidden among its woods; the muddy Danube rolls blue at last through golden harvest fields, and copses dwarfed to brushwood. There is no limit to the view, except the haze of sunset.

A road so steep that it would be elsewhere called a precipice descends from citadel to river. Here, as on the other side, the cliffs fall in steps, but not so abrupt. Broken walls, bits of shanties, trodden

fodder, fascines piled up, mounds and holes, heaps of rags, cover the level ground. After a battle there are always rags. Whence and why and how they come I cannot suggest. They are not bandages nor dressings of wounds, but nameless, colourless, shapeless fragments of stuff.

Having trusted my waggon to a Bulgar driver whilst I made some inquiries, this typical specimen of the stupidest race existing let the horses shift and stamp at flies until one of them trod over the precipice. A gallant struggle, which my Bulgar defeated by pulling at the reins, a last desperate wrench to get at least his head down hill, and over the poor brute went, dragging his companion and two riding horses tied behind. They fought every inch of the descent, and actually carried the waggon fifty feet sheer down without overturning. But it was bound to come. A horse fell upon his side, smashed the pole, and I know not what besides. Out flew my coachman headlong, and waggon and horses lay in a kicking heap.

A score of handy Russians gained the spot as quickly as I did, and without exclaiming or lamenting began steadily to loose the horses. No Englishmen could have been quicker, more silent,

or more helpful; whilst a hundred Roumanians above cackled like geese. Saving the damage to my waggon, which was but a trifle in comparison, this extraordinary accident cost me nothing. The horses had not even a scratch. But perhaps it will long be told about Nicopolis how a cart and four horses fell half-way from citadel to river and escaped unhurt. The end of my adventure was not yet, nevertheless—my broken vehicle and frightened horses had several more adventures before reaching *terra firma.*

To repair damage at Nicopolis would have been difficult at all times, and is now impossible. I crossed the river to Turnu the same night, luckily finding an old acquaintance in the officer on duty at the *pont.* The Roumanians have not built a bridge, nor do they, I fancy, seriously entertain the thought. With a steam launch, a tugboat, and two large lighters tied together, and rudely decked, they slowly transport their forces to the other side.

In Turnu I found many friends, but unluckily missed General Radovitz, who had just gone with his staff to Nicopolis. There is a curious ignorance in Roumania as to the doings and intentions of the

national army, but a real glut of information about Russian movements. I learned such news as would have surprised the world had I been so incautious as to credit it. But the most innocent of correspondents would be preserved from indiscretion at Turnu. I found that the rule forbidding foreign despatches had been no way relaxed, and the Russian officer in charge was courteous but firm. By no ingenious mingling of public with private news could I circumvent his shrewdness. He smiled blandly with the air of a policeman who says, "No, you don't."

The whole day my waggon was repairing; not till dark could I cross the river. I may mention the extreme kindness of a Russian naval officer in command at the wharf, whose zeal to make me comfortable, expressed in most elementary French, almost caused me to pitch headlong over the unfenced deck. There are half-a-dozen hair-breadth escapes that I have seen in my life which sometimes come back to me in dreams, and wake me with a nightmare. That black night in the Indian Ocean, when a monstrous wave rolled the bulwarks under, and I found my feet in the nettings, my body poised above the inky deep, and not a soul to hear my

cry—that snaky crawl in the pits of Maäbdeh, when a falling stone behind meant death—the earthquake at Granada—the puff-adder that lay under my raised foot in Fanteeland—to these and others I may add that moment when I drew back just in time, seeing the swift black river gleam beneath my foot. Though three parts of Nicopolis, and those the handsomest, remain unhurt by the bombardment, there was no light anywhere. Roumanian soldiers lay slumbering beside the road, and crowded each open space. Following a lantern we struggled on for weary miles in the hope of finding a village, until at length the light gave out, the road was lost, and it began to rain. Horses and men dozed supperless through the remaining hours of night, but by noon I reached Karagach again. A weary wait are we likely to have before the attack begins. For two nights and a day it has been raining with scarcely a break. The valleys are full of water, the sky grey with clouds. But in spite of weather and mud the troops here are to march towards Lovcha. How the artillery is to get through I do not yet perceive.

August 12.

"Heaven itself turns against us," said General Zortoff to me last night as we hopelessly surveyed a leaden sky. It is natural that the master of many thousand human lives should fancy that Providence is watching him with peculiar interest, but correspondents who have it in hand to instruct and amuse many scores of thousands have quite as much reason to suppose that their concerns are regarded by the weather-clerk. "A plague o' both your houses," we exclaim in this dreary break. For three days now the rain has been incessant, and we are as closely chained to our quarters as if snow-bound. An expedition across the village last evening from my hut to the General's carried me through puddled clay, midleg deep in the fords which I slowly and carefully groped out. What abysses of mud lay in the middle track I dare not attempt to guess. Like our village road is every path for miles about, and one is tempted to add that the country is all mud or water.

It must be borne in mind that we are quite off the high road at Paradim. Coming here, after weeks of sunshine, I risked my wheels and my horses in crossing two brooks. Though some hundreds of

waggons had passed, and some thousands might be expected to follow, nothing like a bridge had been built. A quantity of branches tossed down anyhow dammed the water, giving a treacherous foothold. When I rode by the spot, three days later, one Bulgar and two little girls were contemplating a quantity of logs, three axes, and a large saw, which lay by the stream. They were marvelling, I should fancy, at the system which keeps forty thousand stout fellows chafing in idleness, whilst one Bulgar and two little girls are put to work of such importance. When we were all racing to one point or another, flying over the Balkans, galloping towards Nicopolis, pressing upon Rustchuk, there was excuse for carelessness about roads. So long as troops and artillery could pass, that sufficed. But now, round Plevna at least, there has been nearly a month's quiet, in the sense that everywhere the army has had leisure for work. Men and officers would rejoice to get something to do, and goodness knows there is enough in every direction that needs doing.

The village in which we await the third attack on Plevna is perhaps more miserable than customary. It may be a fine distinction to draw, but I fancy

the inhabitants are more deeply encrusted with dirt, and are slower of comprehension. There is nothing for a man to do, weatherbound in this dismal spot, but to relieve his mind by drawing its likeness. Paradim stands upon a bare hill slope, parched and brown when we first saw it, now puddled mud. Bare slopes environ it on every side. There is not a tree outside the village, and in it nothing but dwarfed acacias and mulberries. In the valleys there must be cultivation, for barley is abundant; but one sees nothing of it. As for gardens, I have beheld no such thing in Bulgaria. Potatoes have not yet been introduced to the country. Once in a week's ride you will see a little field of cabbages, but I have never been able to buy any. Onions may be met with, but very seldom. Flowers do not exist, save in the beautiful wild garden of Nature's planting. The Turks are careful gardeners; but in Christian villages there is absolutely nothing—not even among the richest peasants. They have no idea of such refining influences. This appears to me significant. Savage maidens, black or brown or yellow, love flowers, and give themselves some little trouble to obtain them. Not so that being of colour indeterminate, the Bulgar.

Perhaps a description of the house in which I have set up my tabernacle will give readers to understand what manner of life consumes the wretch condemned to sit before Plevna whilst the rain comes down. One enters from the road through a gateway in the mound of mud, set with dry thorns, that marks our landlord's property. There was once a wattle gate to throw across this aperture, but it lies rotting near by. In the compound thus fenced stand four little mulberry-trees — a rare blessing. Two outhouses of uncertain form and vague utility stand about; they are built of wattle, and lean like the Tower at Pisa. Nothing grows in the courtyard beside the mulberry-trees, not even grass. I forgot: dogs grow and flourish—dogs of great size and ferocity, who watch you all day with small red eyes, eager for the chance to catch you alone. Now and again the whole pack springs up, and gallops out vociferously, seeking a mysterious vengeance. Our music at night is a chorus of barking, with sudden bursts of worrying.

We are here still in the zone where people build their houses half underground. My host's front door goes not so cellar-deep as some of those in Roumania; but it probably lies six feet beneath

the ground level. Its material, of course, is mud, and it boasts no chimney. A hole in the roof lets smoke out and light in at once. Upon the principal room two others give, which enjoy the luxury of holes in the wall instead of the roof; but they have no flat stone for a fireplace. In these apartments there is actually no furniture. They stand bare as a dog-kennel, saving a litter of foul rags on the mud floor. No furniture do the richest Bulgars need but a Turkish table and a water-jug. The Turkish table is round, often cut from a single tree, and stands about six inches from the earth—for floor there is none.

My host has one small knife, which he treasures exceedingly, two earthenware plates, two wooden spoons, and an iron pot. He never saw a fork, but he has heard of them as instances of profligate luxury at Tirnova. I cannot make out what cattle he owns, but he has a wife and five filthy children. I have contracted to pay the woman half a franc a day to wash her offspring in the morning, but she needs continual reminders. Before my arrival they used to be washed on Sundays only. Though their faces be apparently clean now for half an hour or so, I dare not let them approach me, *pour cause*, and

their father is outside the bargain. Indeed, I could not reasonably expect such a big wash as that for half a franc. His manners are of a sort which marks the Bulgar from all other savages whom I have travelled among. It is evidently characteristic of the race—for individuals educated at the Robert College, speaking English, and ready to discuss with equal volubility the British Constitution, the musical glasses, and the immortal William—these persons have it almost more offensively than the peasant.

The Bulgarian manner is above all things impertinent—not consciously perhaps. Having himself no self-respect or manly spirit, he addresses every one with coarse familiarity, nor understands when he receives a check. Mine host will shamble to the table, take up anything there that catches his eye—especially strange articles of food—examine it with a broad smile, and take up another thing. Thus, between fury, disgust, and amusement, I have just watched him handle every biscuit in a box, paw each of them over, smell, and taste a bit here and there. He does not understand at all when I pitch them out in the mud, but sends his children to scramble for them with the dogs. So an "educated" Bulgar will lounge up and say familiarly, "Who are you?"

or "Where are you going to?" No "bush" negro will do this, but one is irritated by just the same impertinence at Sierra Leone, Kingston, and all other settlements where missionaries have eradicated "bush" virility, and not replaced it by civilised tact.

I am not at all proud of my fellow-Christians in this land. It gives me a certain shock to see the cross with which they stamp everything—children, cattle, furniture. My host's iron pot has a cross stamped in the metal; all the village cows are branded with it, besides their private mark. This is no less than studied insult and defiance towards the Mahomedan population, which they bear with contempt. But how does it tally with the stories of fanatical oppression that we hear?

The stupidity of this people, much more than their barbarism, is shown in our daily dealings with them. With a whole harvest waiting in their yards, they refuse to sell us corn—not to me only, but to the Russians. Put money in their hands, six times the value, and they still refuse. We have to take by force and pay afterwards. This is not ill-will towards the invader, but mere obstinate suspicion and stupidity. I have patiently asked them to

explain, but found no answer save a vacant stare. They cannot explain, for there is no meaning in what they do. A Bulgar complained of ill-treatment by a Cossack near this place. The Cossack was returning from special service, half-dead with hunger. By the peasant's own account, this poor fellow offered him a franc and asked for a chicken. There were scores running about the yard, but to his face the Bulgarian swore he had not a chicken in the world. The Cossack lost temper at the impudence of his lie and knocked the churl down. I know this story is true, for exactly the same thing has happened to myself, and I can feel for that hungry Cossack.

Monstrously amused would people be who observed our way of life in this *kraal.* There are four of us, more or less, resident therein. Would it be profaning the mystery which should environ private life to tell how my companions were named in baptism? Two of them have surrendered the right to claim privacy, and the third, if he mean keeping to his present associations, might as well take the plunge at once. Wherever else there was fun and good company before Plevna, it did not fail with us. Dawn was heralded by M'G.'s cheerful song, which

scarcely ceased throughout the day, and chased us to our beds at night. Solomon's ditties were a thousand and five, but no man hath numbered M'G.'s. If General Ignatieff had a musical turn he might possibly rival this complete songster, but there is no evidence that his Excellency has a bent that way. Nothing quenches the harmonious flow of our comrade. He lies, when discovered by the daylight, rolled in his greatcoat and rugs, upon the hay wherewith he has filled our *stoop*, singing; he rises presently, and, amidst a philosophical discourse with D., he sings: each gulp of tea is alternated with a stanza, and he rolls his early cigarette to a chorus. Skobeleff declares with comic rage that M'G. has learned nothing since they rode together through the Khivan desert except some new bits of song more abominably stupid than his old assortment.

J. does not sing, but he does something almost more delightful—he composes songs. Fate caught him at a moment when he had scarcely begun to "adapt" an opera, and has pursued him here with Act I., "in galley." Could there be employment more absorbing on a rainy day, before the enemy, than to compose a bandit's chorus, a maiden's prayer, an apostrophe to the bold bad villain, and all the

rest of it? Whilst M'G. at full length lilts the easy refrains of childhood, J., his eyebrows knitted, sits in my canteen with proofs before him, and makes out poesy. The dialogue which I catch at this moment of writing runs thus:—

M'G. "'When the heart of a man is oppressed with care,
It makes matters worse if a woman be there——'"

J. "Give me a useful rhyme for 'headlong.'"

M'G. "Fed-long. Example: I have not fed long! King, where's the *tchi* (tea)?"

J. "No! the situation is this. The girl is at the window, you know, and threatens to jump out——"

M'G. "'Oh, where are you going to, my pretty maid?
With your red, rosy cheeks——"

J. "Look here, you know, Mac! I've undertaken to get this thing done in six weeks from now, and Act I. isn't finished yet. B., come out of your waggon, and sit upon this songster."

M'G. "'Wait for the waggon, wait for the waggon,'"—et cetera.

J. "'Headlong' won't do. What a poor language ours is!"

M'G. "Let her jump feet foremost. There's a rhyme to foremost :—

From this here window I will jump feet foremost,
Of earth or me, just listen which will roar most."

The rhyme is found at last, with more or less of reason attached to it, but the songs cease not, nor the laughter. Presently, to the tune of a 'Hunting Morning,' we saddle our steeds, and ride out in a break of the showers. Splashed to the neck, we return for breakfast, and Skobeleff comes to share our meal. Two stately Circassians follow, carrying a bucket of soup, the General's contribution. The Russian soldier's soup is a marvellous compound. It is made in gigantic iron kettles, about the capacity of those wherein our forefathers boiled alive a parricide or a coiner or a heretic. Its essence is all sorts of meat, its accidents cabbage, pumpkin, onions when they can be foraged, and, in a general way, everything that the company can pick up. Grapes are much esteemed, crabs and wild pears have their value, maize is rightly held to be a most desirable ingredient. If, in looking for them, a soldier find anything whatever that may strike his fancy, he pops it into the soup—say, a weasel, a bunch of love-apples, a crow, a chilé, or a melon. The compound is not

nice, but many and many a time have we paid the cook a rouble for a portion.

The chances are a hundred to one that by combining our resources we are able to offer our guest a turkey, caught and killed one hour before—to the fury of its owner, who subsides upon the instant when he sees it headless, and placidly accepts a franc. This formula of grim refusal is gone through every day, and we accept it as a thing of course. My henchman, King, receives the bird, runs a stick through it, and puts it in the fire, legs all abroad, and feathers frizzling. The talent he displays in this difficult operation has justly obtained for him the functions of head cook. Besides the turkey, it is probable that we have a tin of meat, which the label identifies as beef or veal, or what it may once have been; without that hint, no human creature would suppose it to be aught besides touchwood, stewed soft in tallow and brown gravy. Then it may be that the *Marketender* who dwells opposite has received a consignment of salt, enveloped for convenience of carriage in a pig's hind leg, which he retails by the slice. The same *Marketender*, for a ridiculous consideration of ten francs the bottle, has furnished us with wine, from the mid fountain of

which arises the *amari aliquid*, whereof a poet has written, but correspondents alone have tasted. To counteract the eccentricities of this liquid, I produce jam, real honest Crosse and Blackwell, in which, if any deception dwell, sugar lingers also to the full value of one's money. Our guests may perhaps like the songs of the *Daily News*, but they adore the *Standard's* jam.

August 13.

Three days' rain has made all movements here impossible. The Russians have given themselves very little trouble in mending the roads, and their work will not stand bad weather. The roads are now in a much worse condition than when we arrived. The number of dead cattle about and the general filth must cause disease. The bodies are seldom dragged fifty yards from the wayside, and only in two instances have I observed that they have been covered with soil. All classes in the army are bitterly disappointed with the Bulgarians, and weary of the war. The Bulgarians, on their side, are confused and alarmed at their invaders, and a sullen spirit is arising.

General Skobeleff has arrived here, having visited

Trojan, which was found deserted. In his daring reconnaissances round Lovcha, this gallant officer had two horses killed under him, making four so lost during the war. He reported that fifteen thousand Turks are strongly posted in Lovcha, and demanded a division and a half to attack them. Instead of receiving them his force was recalled here, but could not pass the swollen rivers, which the General swam with a few Cossacks. Nothing is expected to be done here for a week.

Details have arrived of the repulse of General Gourko's forces. He divided them into two columns to attack Yeni Saghra and Eski Saghra. Each was badly beaten. Two regiments of dragoons were surrounded, and lost half their numbers in cutting their way out. The Bulgarian legion suffered still more heavily, losing all its officers and two-thirds of its men. Out of a battalion of six hundred only one hundred and sixty remain. The army is now concentrated in the Schipka and Himankoi Passes. Kasanlik is reoccupied by the Turks.

General Gourko has gone to St. Petersburg to resume the command of the Guards, who are coming here. The siege of Rustchuk is virtually raised.

August 24.

It is evident that the decisive actions are approaching at last. The weariest wait that soldiers or correspondents ever struggled through is coming to an end. For three weeks we have been quartered in these wretched kraals, with the barest necessities of life provided us. For three weeks our only amusement has been to ride from one sweltering position to another, over shadeless hills that quiver in heat more than tropical.

The advantages of the situation have all lain with the enemy. An Asiatic or a negro can sprawl upon his back and contentedly frizzle where a European falls ill with sheer heat and listlessness. To counteract the evil of idleness, more, I think, than from an impulse of caution, endless trenches have been dug, and the strong redoubts and batteries which dot these hillsides everywhere have been built. This accounts for a certain want of plan—at least, if there be a general idea, it is too large for me to grasp. The spots fortified have not been carefully chosen. The big intrenchment between this and Karagach seems indeed—for I was not allowed to survey it from the inside—a complete and formidable position, extending over all a group of hills. But

the redoubt behind Bogot, admirably built as it is, would be untenable to a foe occupying the heights over against it towards Plevna. The redoubt of Vladina, bigger still, has been abandoned with that village. Behind Sgalinca there are continuous works from hill to hill which would doubtless repulse attack from Gravitza in that direction, whilst upon the northern side of this village endless rifle-pits have been dug, the slopes trenched, and two ugly little batteries constructed on either side of a large "barrow." Behind, again, lies the camp already spoken of, and trenches command the road all the way back to Bulgareni, where the important bridge over the Osma is guarded by a series of intrenchments and batteries along the hills opposite. In fact, the whole country-side has been dug, and still the soldiers are weary and disheartened.

On Wednesday the Schipka Pass was attacked in great force, the Turks sallied out of Lovcha upon Selvie, and we hear vague rumours of movements at Osman Bazar. We are told that the assaults on the Pass were defeated with great slaughter, and we know that the attempt on Selvie failed. The influence of these operations on our position must be

noted, however, seeing that they may prove to have been most important.

On Wednesday night General Zortoff received here a message from Prince Mirsky, at Selvie, announcing that the Turks were moving against him. He forthwith ordered General Skobeleff to the rescue, and that indefatigable officer started at daylight with a brigade of infantry and two regiments of Cossacks. These troops, lying at Vladina and Slatina, had been intended to occupy Tucenica, Radisovo, and the country round them, which had been abandoned by the Turks upon a Cossack demonstration. Instead of doing so they moved south, round Lovcha, to Mirsky's assistance. A great gap was thus left in our line, and the whole force had to concentrate. The 30th Division reached this place after a terrible march, and the 16th went to Pelichat. As for the peasants of Slatina and Vladina, they received orders to fly. They now occupy a camp of waggons beneath the hill at Pelichat—at least, I saw them there last night.

Drenova is still guarded by a heavy force of cavalry—two regiments, I should think, by the size of their camp. Bogot is only held by some Cossacks, a force of whom watches Tucenica and Radisovo.

General Krüdener is still at Karagach, and the Roumanians still stretch between Riben and Tristenik, with their headquarters at Brislan. I am describing a curious disposition, but such information as I can gather leads to the belief that the gap left by the withdrawal of a brigade to help Mirsky has been, not filled, but widened. On the other hand, a respectable force is now for the first time concentrated round this important point. Whilst writing I hear that the Turks have come down in force and burnt Radisovo, Tucenica, and a small village unmarked on the map.*

Were it not for the strong probability of an attack by the enemy I should not stay in this horrible desert one hour more. The Russians are evidently "out of it." Their plan has broken up, their soldiers have lost heart, their generals quarrel among themselves, and their legions have vanished into space. From this army we cry for troops, and not a man answers. It used to be asked with derision, Where are the Turks? Much more curious now is it to inquire, Where are the Russians? Reckoning up the numbers we can account for, there appears a woful deficit. Is this the effect of disease

* This afterwards turned out to be incorrect.

carefully hidden, or were the corps so weak at the beginning? Both one explanation and the other must be allowed, I think. However it be, in this crisis we need not discuss reasons; the fact is imminent and unmistakable. We have not men enough by two-thirds here, and in all Bulgaria we have not half enough. Disregarding General Zortoff's call for assistance, stripping the Emperor of all except one brigade, General Radetsky can only take the offensive towards Schipka with ten battalions, whilst everywhere, from the Dobrudscha to Plevna, from Sistof to the Balkans, we stand on the defensive.

Those German strategists whom our commanders were to imitate must be curling their grim old moustaches in amusement. Never was there a pause so ridiculous, and, though difficulties and faults be overridden by main force, Russian science will be judged thereby. When I remember what I wrote a month ago, what was told me, and what I had every reason to believe, the irony of fate comes home to me. We used to talk of Adrianople as our own, gave orders to the Cossacks for a Turkish horse, a saddle-cloth, or yataghan. We used to discuss the resources of Philippopolis, and longingly

inquire if and how and what European hotel might be found there. Without awe we spoke of table-cloths to be shortly enjoyed, knives, forks, plates, eatable food and drinkable wine, the sight of men and women, ladies and gentlemen, not human animals—all those things, in short, of which I have now been deprived for ten weeks and more. And this is the contrast, the bitter truth provided us—to wait the tender mercies of our foe despised in the filthiest of all hamlets, devoured by flies and vermin, half-starved, beaten, and disheartened. I could laugh heartily if the fever would leave me and I could get enough to eat.

It appears to be admitted on all hands that the whole system of government in Russia is pledged in this affair. The Emperor cannot go back beaten—that is an axiom. And if the enemy push forward on our left, as they seem likely to do, where will he go next? His Majesty was to visit Tirnova. I left the arches standing and the flags still flying, though draggled. He has given up Tirnova, he has even quitted his reeking residence at Biela, and the Turks still pursue. At Gorny-Studen, with two divisions and a picked corps of riflemen, besides his escort, all the Turkish army could not disturb him. But his

divisions have marched, the Turks are threatening on this side, moving on the other, attacking furiously from the south. Where can he find safety, unless in Roumania—saving always a victory, which no one seems to expect?

I do not wish to say one word that could injure the prospects of an army always most kind to me, and therefore I deal in generalities. But it is too evident for demonstration that until the reinforcements come from Russia we are helpless before the enemy. And it is evident also to any one who has eyes that our soldiers will not bear another defeat. I do not presume to say what they will do, but the days have gone by when Russian soldiers would march to certain death for their Czar. So much is apparent. If another assault on Plevna fail there will be an explosion, against whom or what I do not venture to say; its force may probably be directed by accident at the last moment. And a catastrophe more serious is looked for at home.

These people do not hide their feelings nor make the best of a disaster. They exaggerate their losses, and tell to every passer-by who is responsible for them. Our idea of a Russian as a man cautious, afraid to speak evil of dignities, is curiously in-

correct. Soldiers, at least, pour out their tale of grievances with a frankness rather bewildering both to their own chiefs and to strangers. They display another feeling also. As the Russian becomes better acquainted with the Bulgar, his good-natured pity changes to a bitter dislike and scorn. Among the officers this feeling is already intense, and it daily grows with the soldiery. I have told you several times what annoyance the Bulgars give; what silly selfishness they display; what stupid spite towards the stranger. It was evident from the first that if an effort should be asked of them they would not try to answer; the effort has been asked of them here to eke out our soldier's diet with such simple luxuries as milk and butter and eggs, to aid him in the search for fodder, and so on—all for money, of course—and they have stubbornly refused.

We used to take what was denied and pay afterwards. The Bulgar was quite content with a system which he understood, and when you had caught his fowl or looted his stack of barley he was pleased to assist in turning the plunder to account. But the Grand Duke, from the height of his comfort, has issued an order forbidding such manners upon

pain of death. The result is that people who regard the order may simply starve. General Zortoff here has been reduced to preserved meats these three days past, unable to buy so much as a fowl. I am curious to know how long he will scrupulously obey commands given him in utter ignorance of the real state of affairs here. Every advantage the Bulgars take, from petty cheating to flat robbery, whilst the brute rudeness of their manners alone causes antipathy; so that an evil spirit is arising, and fifty times a day the soldier may be heard to ask who sent him to shed his blood for such creatures as these? Upon the other hand, Bulgars say openly that they did not want alteration in their government, that they got along quite pleasantly with the Turks before their invaders came unasked. Thus the bad blood thickens.

I am interested to observe that the chances of a winter campaign are no longer discussed with a light heart, even by regimental officers. It has gradually worked downwards through every rank, from the thoughtful to the most feather-headed, that winter campaigning in this country will be a strange and terrible experience. Between November and June our bridges, such as they are, will have to be laid

up, and all communication must be carried on by boats. The roads will be impassable, and each small detachment of soldiery will have to depend on its own resources. Where, indeed, the troops shall be lodged is a momentous question. There is not food in the country, other than bread, to sustain the army a month.

It seems likely that huge barracks and huts must be built and provisioned; but where are they or the money to come from? And whilst the army remains sickening and weary in its quarters, the population it came to free will be decimated by Bashi-Bazouks. Verily the confusion of men's minds may be great in regarding the chances of our situation. To me it seems very black on every side.

My Bulgar host appears to share this view. Yesterday he got his head shaved in the Turkish manner, leaving the one scalp-lock by which a *houri* indifferent to cleanliness may, perhaps, drag him into Paradise. He only smiles, with a cunning, downcast look, when we ask what will be his movements if the Turks break in. I feel sure that in some dark corner of his subterranean dwelling that dirty old man keeps a *turboosh*, and mayhap a Koran. His children are all shaved to match, and

if he can only remember to wash them in time they may pass for little Turks. The old woman, I should suppose, will be protected by her incredible dirt.

KARAGACH, *August* 28.

In their first impatience at the Plevna defeat the Russian commanders proclaimed a date for revenge. They announced that on the 16th, old style, the 28th the new, the attack would be renewed. For awhile they held to this resolution, but circumstances proved too strong for them. Our beleaguering force, instead of gathering numbers and power every day, has lately been diminishing. The situation will have changed again before you get this letter, and therefore I may state that General Zortoff has not twenty-five thousand men under his command at present. In Plevna there are fifty-five battalions of Nizams, as General Krüdener tells me, besides fifteen thousand irregulars.

We cannot now defend the line of works erected when our numbers were still insufficient for the offensive. The Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks go much as they please between Vladina and Skobeleff's outposts, half-way on the Lovcha-Selvie road. They

have burned the late headquarters of that general at Joglau, and enterprising partisans have pushed beyond. Prince Mirsky is weakened at Selvie by the despatch of reinforcements to the Schipka Pass. The Roumanians on our right are arguing their claims and duties before taking an active part in the war; meanwhile they profess an intention of working alone on the other side of the Wid. So that the prospect of action on the Russian part is remote. But there are two sides in a fight, and if the Turks are as well supplied with information as they ought to be, seeing that Bulgarian spies may be had cheap, and their own people come and go without attention, they may be expected to take advantage of the moment.

It has been notorious in the country that something would be done to-day, and peasants as well as soldiers declared that if the Russians did not attack the Turks would. So, as there was a pause in the operations at Schipka, I ran down to this place from Sistof, whither I had gone to forward a telegram.

Up to the present time my good fortune with my horses has been envied on every hand. Whilst some of my colleagues have lost all they had, and everybody mourns for one at least, I have never

had a day's sickness among my four, though they have been very hard-worked. I am afraid the luck has forsaken me. This morning as I left Sistof there was a shower, scarcely enough to lay the blinding dust, but enough to deepen puddles into quagmires. For two hours and a half I stuck in a mudhole, and when at length some passing Russians levered out the vehicle by main force, my horses were transformed. Starting at 5 a.m. I expected to arrive here by ten o'clock, and, after resting through the heat, to push as far as Paulicane or near it; but they have either sprained themselves or else they have entirely lost heart and temper. At each ascent they come to a stand, and when urged forward they kick like demons. One of my saddle horses had already given in, and had been left behind at Sistof; the other I rode in here, and she drooped all the way.

I mention these matters only for the lesson they convey. Horse-sickness of several kinds is rampant. The Emperor is said to have lost some hundreds of his most valuable cattle. But if the horses give out we are indeed embarrassed. An hour's rain to-day delayed all the convoys; the deluge of a fortnight since cut off the supply of bread in every camp

during two or more days. How will it be when the autumn rains begin?

General Krüdener is perplexed and indignant equally at the blame laid upon him by English and Russian journalists. At dinner to-day he again set before me the explanation. Perhaps Prince Schakoffskoi may offer in turn a counter-explanation. General Krüdener's statement is as simple as may be. He declares that the Prince had no orders to attack; that his duty was to silence the batteries above Gravitza, and then to communicate with his chief, so that the assault might be simultaneous. Instead of doing so the Prince lost patience, and pushed on the infantry, after two hours' cannonade, not even informing his superior of the movement. General Krüdener had no knowledge of it until he saw Prince Schakoffskoi's troops streaming across the hill. All this is perfectly correct, but the General's best plea he cannot give—he was asked by the staff to perform an operation almost impossible, then was imperiously commanded to perform it, and officers were finally sent to see it performed. Not for the first time in this war troops were thrust into a battle almost hopeless.

GORNY-STUDEN, *August* 29.

My worst fears were justified to-day. Instead of reaching Paulicane I have had to come hither, in the forlorn hope of discovering a horse, an elephant, or —anything to take me on. My poor beasts have given out utterly, and my waggon, with all that therein is, would be standing by the roadside at Causmahala had I not met two unscrupulous Cossacks, who harnessed their rat-like ponies and brought it here—not for love, however. What is the matter with the brutes I cannot see, and the veterinary surgeon is more scientific than intelligible. They have now all gone wrong, and I have no choice but to leave them here and get forward as best I can.

Gorny-Studen is a better place than Biela. I have not much more to say of it, because comparisons in this case are necessarily "odorous." The Emperor dwells in a house half-way down the valley, and his suite encamps upon the slope above. How a house so big as the imperial headquarters ever came to be set up in a place so small as Gorny-Studen is a mystery. But though his quarters are so unusually splendid—the building is at least as large as a "villa residence" at £50 a year

—I fear his Majesty does not enjoy himself with an untroubled spirit. Biela was a vile abode, but it is not pleasant to be turned out of one's own though it be never so homely. The Emperor cannot but feel deep grief, having such a character as he possesses, at the misery this war has brought upon all kinds of innocent people. Those vastly more active than he in the events which brought things to such a pass seem curiously contented and cheerful. They can talk with great earnestness and sympathy of horrors committed by the Turk, but their spirits are unaffected thereby. So the strategists, who, as some think, did not take every precaution possible, and thus lost, perhaps, a certain number of lives unnecessarily, seem quite at ease about their affairs. They apparently believe that Von Moltke is regarding them with admiration mixed with envy. But the Emperor is a man of another stamp, and of another stamp also are the soldiers. The one suffers, eating his heart in grief and perplexity; the others growl out their views to all who care to hear.

Confident in its Emperor's *numen*, Gorny-Studen is happy, let the Turk rave as he will. It is a pleasant place to visit when things look slightly awkward elsewhere. Here no ruder sounds disturb the sense

than the trampling of the Cherkess escort, whose undress tunics of red silk make such brilliant splashes in the sun-dried landscape. Each man of this force will eat up Suleiman Pasha and take Osman for dessert, and everybody knows it. Let those be anxious who will, there is no terror, no confusion, no regret at Gorny-Studen. Every soldier knows himself brave, and every general believes himself as talented as any other in the world. All have confidence in the star of their Emperor, their country, and themselves. They never throw themselves into excitement because some unfortunate events have happened. Of such chances war is made.

This appears to me the subjective philosophy of the place, and the only person who does not accept it is the Emperor, as I have said. He cannot believe that all things are as they should be when Bulgars and Turks are massacring each other by the thousand. He shows himself less and less "equal to the situation," being, in the first place, unconvinced that Von Moltke would have conducted the war exactly as it has been conducted, and, in the second, that it is right to turn one savage loose on another under protection of a Christian monarch. But his

Majesty must settle that for himself; he will not find either accusers or logical defenders at Gorny-Studen.

There may have been a thousand inhabitants in the village before it was immortalised by the visit of the whole Russian Court, excepting the ladies. The natives dwelt, and they dwell even yet, in little compounds upon either side of a rivulet, which perhaps was lucid as the Bandusian fount before Pactolus drained into it. There are no shops and no streets. On the hillsides stand cottages, mud-built, with winding paths between. Not a tree can be beheld for miles round. The acacia-bushes are burnt up, the white mulberries never reach an altitude worthy of the name. Upon one side of the creek, lined with thirsty willows, dwells the Emperor; on the other, high up on the ridge, dwells the Grand Duke, surrounded by Kurdish tents of felt stretched on a trellis-work. Every compound has its group of tents, more or less pretentious, its waggons, its crowd of servants and horses. Upon the Emperor's hill these latter are tethered by the hundred in a group. A neat encampment of square tents arranged in a double row gives shelter to his officers; behind it stand their waggons in disorder.

General Ignatieff alone, I think, of those in attendance on the Emperor lives under a roof.

But the place is unwholesome, as the city of Hygeia itself would be if occupied for some weeks by several thousand men to whom no convenience is given for cleanliness or decency. There is not a *latrine* in this camp of granddukes and grandees—not an attempt at shelter, nor even place appointed; truly, if there were, that might be the only clean spot for hundreds of yards round, as is beheld at Simnitz. Some sanitary efforts have been made there, but the soldiers resolutely ignore them. Fever has come to Gorny-Studen, as to Biela, with the headquarters, and his Majesty talks of going on to Causmahala, whither disease will certainly follow.

PARADIM.

Returning from Sistof I found our den empty, and upon searching the caverns right and left, not a single correspondent broke cover. All our joyous crew had dispersed, and muddy Russians occupied its lairs. Life is rather dull at Paradim, all alone with horses, servants, and Muscovites, and my joy was equalled only by my perplexity when a stout young gentleman of good address drove a one-horse cart into my yard,

and in Russian first, then German, then French, asked permission to encamp beside me. Thus did I become acquainted with Count Tadischeff, erst a glass of fashion in Vienna, now seeking uniform and horse to serve with the Cossacks. A most pleasant companion he was, speaking fluent English with that accent which one remarks amongst Russians—an accent very pleasing and musical to my ear; Baron Löhneyssen has it also, so has General Skobeleff, but in a less degree the latter. Count Tadischeff was fired by the exploits of this general, and with him he proposed to serve if it might be.

When the war broke out, it was made known, without fuss or formality, that the Czar thought it wrong for attachés to be waltzing, flirting, playing the *petit maître*, when Russia was grappling with the ancestral foe. Accordingly, the younger members of the *corps diplomatique* volunteered almost in a body. Having no knowledge of military service, they could not take rank, and we saw princes, counts, and all other kinds of magnate in the rough uniform of the "common soldier." There was something very droll in this. I do not recollect when it was that a full private came up to me and introduced himself in most excellent English as a

Prince Dolgoruki, but I remember that it chanced to be the very day that I had met his brother for the first time, an aide-de-camp of the Emperor, and one of the most influential personages at Court. He also had met me on the road, and introduced himself; but whilst the one tramped afoot, the other drove four black thoroughbreds which an Emperor might covet. The one had a uniform of coarse woollen cloth, differing no way from that of a private; the other wore a snowy tunic, with half a dozen crosses on his breast and loops for more, gold buttons, epaulettes, and belt, with the ribband of an order dangling from his sword. Another of the diplomatic volunteers was Prince Tzerellef, secretary to General Ignatieff, who accompanied the ex-ambassador to England. He had chosen to enlist among the Circassians, and the stately dress of his regiment was never shown to more advantage.

The brother of "Private" Tadischeff commands the 11th Cavalry Division, attached to the Eleventh Corps, and he lately directed some successful operations on the Lom. Several others I might mention whose names are not so well known abroad. Whilst one Prince Schakoffskoi commands the Eleventh Corps d'Armée, and a second superintends

the administration of Bulgaria, a third wanders round the hospitals as a volunteer nurse.

The position of these diplomatists, soldiers *ad interim*, is anomalous. They cannot be suffered to remain in the ranks, whilst to give them commissions would be absurd. But Russian ingenuity has proved equal to the situation. The volunteer did not formally present himself until fighting had begun, and within a day or two of putting on his uniform he was engaged with the foe, carried himself gallantly, and earned the cross. Within a few days he was again pushed under fire, again behaved gallantly, and won his stripes. A third time he went in search of glory, found it, and was named orderly to the general in command. The process invariably followed this order, and arrived at this result. Thus, Count Tadischeff, who lived in my quarters at Paradim, received his hussar uniform one morning, fought the same day, and had his cross at night. Next morning he went out again, and picked up his advancement to the dignity of corporal. The third day was a third fight, and he awoke orderly to General Zortoff. This promotion was quicker than most, because opportunity served, but no one grudged the young attaché his luck.

It is difficult to suggest a better mode of dealing with the volunteers. The Emperor called them and they came with a will, but they could not be left among the soldiers. Not every one could be trusted with Prince Tzerellef's mission to Belgrade, not every one perhaps, out of holy Russia, would accept it. To bribe unscrupulous persons is easy work; to tempt a Serb to dishonour and treacherous ingratitude needs no persuasive power; but to devise and obtain a guarantee that the bribe shall not be pocketed, and the tempter laughed at, requires the talent of Ahithophel, and I think all the better of Prince Tzerellef for his mishap. Such embassies are not common, however, for which be goodness thanked, and they offer no resource for the employment of princely volunteers. None have thought of joining the service permanently. Their ignorance of every technicality and detail makes them quite unfit for a commission. One may smile at the curious luck which has followed them all, but what better could be done than give them an honourable distinction and a place which virtually admits them to the staff? Whether it was worth while to call out so many young diplomats for this is another question.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE SCHIPKA PASS.

GABROVA, *Sept.* 1.

SINCE my horses broke down I have been obliged to make fifty miles a day without visible means of locomotion and without baggage. I had quite remarkable luck in catching a colleague's waggon bound with two lame horses for Tirnova. Another friend, met by accident, gave me a lift as far as this. Some fifteen miles from the town, however, I got out to ease our tired horses, whilst an endless train of wounded was passing from Schipka, and refugees blocked the roadside. Having climbed the hills I sat and waited, but no cart arrived. Fearing then that it had passed whilst my attention was engaged, I concluded there was nothing for it but to walk.

The scene upon the road, and beside it, was one of the most picturesque that could possibly have been witnessed in modern times. The highway was full of emigrants, with waggons, cattle, sheep, and furni-

ture, going, some one way, some the other, without any clear intention. During the night, lines of fires bordered it, round which the poor folks clustered, whilst their savage dogs rushed at every passer-by.

Very hot the evening was, very dusty the walk. So unintelligibly inquisitive were the passing soldiers, attracted doubtless by my white puggaree, that I half resolved to stop by the roadside till morning. But whilst thinking over the chances that something great might happen in the Pass and I arrive some hours too late, the lights of Gabrova suddenly shone out below, surrounded by a dusty glare of camp-fires. I found refuge in the *hahn*, where Giurgey, mine host here, described to me in marvellous French what he thought of the operations lately carried out on both sides. Next morning I bought a little Turkish horse, very pretty and very spirited, and went up the Pass with a German colleague, who arrived an hour and a half after me.

From Gabrova to the very mountains, where the path suddenly turns over a very steep hill, the narrow valley was full of carts, cattle, children, and camping refugees. There are two stone bridges across the Jantra in the defile, one of which must absolutely be kept clear if military operations are to

proceed—a wooden structure is being thrown across rather above, but it is not yet practicable. The approach to this narrow span, without hand-rail or parapet, high above the torrent, was so crowded with carts, donkeys, and pack-horses, that I, unencumbered, could not force a way through. After several escapes from accident I forced my horse down the bank. The Russian sentries were perfectly happy. So long as no train appeared upon the road, they saw no reason to interfere. Russian good-nature, good-temper, and kindness are most real, but they have their "correlative." I suspect that if orders had been given to clear the Pass, or a disaster had arrived, these obstructions would have been pitched aside with just the same recklessness as that which now permitted them to form. When I passed in the evening they had been dispersed, but only to the roadside, whence a whole panic-stricken crowd would flood the defile, if an alarm were raised.

The road which I remember so terrible, on the day I rode with poor General Derojinsky when he went to attack the Turkish position, is now as good as could be wished. The rocks have been blasted or picked away, soil has been thrown down, and the

whole space widened as much as needful. The first signs of war, excepting always wounded men, who straggled or were carried downwards, began at the hill on which the Turks received us more than six weeks ago, on July 18. Where their trenches had been stood a dozen great hospital tents, with smaller tents and huts around. They were empty for the most part, since the wounded are sent off as fast as possible for fear of sudden pressure.

At this point I refused longer to believe that a column of smoke rising on a wooded hill, which we had already left behind on our right hand, could be mere bivouac fires. Upon inquiring of superior officers I learned that the Circassians had come down early that morning, and had set alight the village of Zelenodrava, where four companies of Bulgarians ought to have been keeping watch. More than this I cannot ascertain with certainty. Some say that the raiders have been all killed, others that the Bulgars have been exterminated, others that the former retired without fighting, others that the latter were not there at all as they should have been. I now believe the fact to be that the Circassians came down in ignorance that the village was occupied, and that the Bulgars were all asleep. Upon the latter hastily

forming, the enemy withdrew, wounding five of the legion, and suffering no loss. But I cannot be sure that they went towards their own lines.

This act of audacity stirred the Russians to action. Zelenodrava, as I have said, is almost level with the entrance to the Pass, not four miles from Gabrova. It lies upon a by-path joining the road from that place to Selvie. Irritated by the demonstration, our batteries began firing into the wooded positions of the enemy, and as we rode up the discharges became more and more frequent. Nor did the Turks lie quiet upon that flank, though they replied only with rifle-shots. Wounded men began to trickle down, and the bullets to whiz over our heads. About half-way along the continuous series of ridges which is called the Schipka Pass, I saw the limit of the Turkish advance, marked by those rough works, entrenchments, and holes which the troops had raised in the heat of action. A battery had been rudely thrown up along the right edge of the track, and the caution of the men about it showed that their foe had the range. The width of the ridge here is perhaps two hundred yards, with deep valleys on either side, and wooded hills beyond, which tower high above it.

Just before reaching the broken plateau where stands this battery, the right bank lifts itself above the road almost perpendicularly. Here in a cave, or hollowed recess, twenty feet in air, dwells General Radetsky "when at home." There is just space for his bed, and for a hospitable cup of tea with a brace of visitors. They were Derojinsky's quarters, before he found the bubble Reputation, and died in the discovery. Just beyond, where the cliff suddenly smoothes down, they show the spot where he fell to a stray bullet. Derojinsky was one of those men common in all armies whose tastes and character are all that is most opposed to soldiering. His quiet, kindly, thoughtful spirit was ever fixed upon home and children. Full of intelligence, he absolutely lacked decision. Any course proposed was to him environed by objections, and he pondered day and night over details which a less conscientious general would have dismissed to others' responsibility. This weakness he knew, I think. The gentle eyes and mouth had a smile kindly, yet troubled, like that of a man most honourable and scrupulous, oppressed by a responsibility beyond his powers. I have never met a soldier more gallant, nor a man more amiable, than poor Derojinsky.

Emerging from shelter of the high ground on

which the battery stands, we saw the three Turkish redoubts crowning a long hill upon our right. Though the trees are thick the redoubts are quite visible. Two have been stormed, but from the middle one the Pass is commanded at about eight hundred yards' distance. To-day its fire was not directed towards the battery, which on its part kept silence. A gallant feat of arms was the storming of those redoubts to the right and left, which were only less formidable than the central one, still remaining in Turkish hands. The trees, though small, stand as thick apparently as in a tropic forest, and the brushwood is as close.

Going on to observe the scene of the earlier attacks, we came, after passing a mile of sheltered ground, upon an open ridge some two hundred yards across. All along here soldiers sat or lay beneath the bank, caissons stood in every clear space, and troops were bivouacked down the left slope. Upon this side numbers of men were busy digging trenches and rifle-pits, as if expecting an attack from the great wooded hill which commands the left flank. Shots were frequent from the Turkish redoubt and the woods to right of us, whilst farther on the Russian cannon boomed continually.

As my companion and I passed before them to-

wards the open, soldiers looked at us with curiosity, but said nothing. Unsuspiciously we went on, aware, of course, that there was danger, but not supposing it to be peculiarly imminent. About ten yards from the cover of the bank a shot whizzed by my ear with that spitting sound which one soon learns to recognise as announcing "close quarters." Instantly it was followed by a dozen, cutting the air all round me and my horse.

One bullet which seemed to pass within an inch of my horse's neck caused him to rear suddenly, and off he set at a mad gallop, whilst the balls sang and spat on every side. In three minutes, I suppose, we had reached the entrenchments and were covered once more. Then I observed that all the troops were gravely watching, their eyes above the trench. So sudden, quick, and well-directed was the fusilade as to give me quite an exalted idea of the Turkish rifleman's chance should he ever compete at Wimbledon. Bullets whizzed all round the bull's-eye, until my horse, madly bolting, made of the target a sort of running deer. The soldiers evidently felt great interest in this match, but they said nothing that I heard. One, however, stretched upon his stomach, smoking, silently pointed to a

track which led round the hill upon the other side. Be sure we looked out for such detours on our further journey, which led us through an increasing fire on the Russian part. But there was no attack, though the troops stood to arms all along the Pass.

General Radetsky tells me that he cannot assault this disagreeable position owing to the awful smell of putridity around it. The enemy has still one gun there, and two batteries on the left of the road. Waggons can only risk the passage under cover of darkness, running the gauntlet of the fire, whilst troops go round the hill upon its further slope. It cannot be said that the Russians are masters of the defile whilst they cannot send provisions or artillery through it except with secrecy at night. The Turks have been successful thus far, and if they hold the redoubt as resolutely as they attacked there must be a heavy loss in taking it.

The Russians on their side are still actively fortifying, and they do not think the Pass can now be lost whatever force be brought against it.

Plenty of spirit survives among the Turks. The Circassians showed in force two days since along the right front, and severely cut up a detachment of Bulgarians. General Radetsky estimates his total

loss up to the present at 500 dead and 1200 wounded. This is hugely beneath the mark. The story of blowing up a Turkish battalion is so far true, General Radetsky informs me, as that the Pass was mined with dynamite; but the enemy perceived the danger, and the explosion was harmless.

I have just met the head of the Chemistry Department in the Hospital Service, who is going up to see if he can disinfect the neighbourhood of the Russian positions. He appears rather hopeless about the resources of science exercised on a range of mountains, and is naturally anxious to know how nearly he must approach the Turks to do his spiriting. He cannot hear of any convention arranged between the armies which will enable peaceful *savants* to work at leisure.

Suleiman Pasha is believed not to have gone to Trojan, though that place is certainly occupied. A report has just arrived here that the Turks have attacked Paradim and been repulsed. After waiting twenty days for this event, it is hard it should take place as soon as I had left the neighbourhood.

Sept. 3.

According to orders given, Lovcha was attacked to-day by Prince Imeritinsky, commanding the 16th Division, a brigade of chasseurs, and the forces of General Skobeleff, and taken in the evening. By this success the Turkish army of Plevna is cut off.

There are no Turks in Trojan.

In their attack from Plevna on the 31st ult. the Russian loss was 1020 men and 40 officers.

CHAPTER IX.

PLEVNA FIGHT.

Tuesday Night.

PLEVNA lies on the north-western slope of a steep hollow, which opens out to the south, forming a little plateau, whence radiates a long spur, called the Radisovo Hill. A village of that name hangs under the crest on the Russian side. Radiating again more north are two other spurs, one of which shortly subsides into a maze of little hills and valleys, and the other dominates Gravitza, which village nestles under the southern crest of a lower height.

Rounding the end of these slopes, to the east of the angle of a great ridge, on which stands a redoubt, is a valley almost semicircular in shape, whence rise hillocks and sweeping fells in bewildering confusion. For the most part they are covered with smooth burnt grass or dusty stubble; but fields of tall maize, as high as a man on horseback, give an occasional tinge of green, when the wind flutters their parched leaves.

There is no tree in sight save a few wild pears scattered here and there, and a hill covered with oak scrub two feet high, so dark in tone that at a distance it seems to have been burnt.

In this semicircle the Russian and Roumanian batteries were planted. During the night of Thursday the whole force moved up to protect the working parties, but the Turks made no sign. At dawn on Friday, ninety-six Russian guns were placed in position, and I believe forty Roumanian, by the greater part of which the Gravitza redoubt was bombarded. This is the redoubt that foiled General Krüdener, and was held to be the key of the ridge. It seemed scarcely to break the sky line —an embodiment of ugly strength. Six cannon were shown in its embrasures, but they proved to be Krupp field-guns, no siege artillery having been brought from Widdin.

On a ridge just below stand three intrenched camps, one behind the other, communicating with the fort and town by telegraph and a broad road. Neither Gravitza nor Radisovo were occupied by the Turks, but in the valley beyond the latter hill and on the farther slope they had strengthened the work which Prince Schakoffskoi could not take, and,

added more, so as to make a very labyrinth of cross fire.

Above the town, to the right, is a great redoubt and on the left slope that formidable earthwork which Skobeleff has just taken. The Lovcha road is guarded by several redoubts, the most important of them being one before Kristine, and almost every hill is intrenched. Upon a high cliff over the town stands a Turkish camp beyond the reach of our guns.

The number of the enemy was put down at sixty thousand by those who had been watching, but these figures were utterly discredited at headquarters.

A bombardment is a dull thing to watch, and I think all the officers of General Krüdener's staff went to sleep upon the sheaves of straw that were strewn about the field chosen for observation. High up on the left thundered a great twelve-gun battery of siege pieces from Rustchuk, and their eight companions thundered below. Though called 24-pounders they throw 84-pound shells. Farther advanced around the amphitheatre, ten Russian field-batteries and four Roumanian blazed in our sight, whilst a dull boom told that the Fourth Corps was doing its work beyond.

As General Krüdener has bluntly refused to inform me how his troops were disposed, and General Zortoff, though smiling, is equally obdurate, I must rely on my own observation.

Two Roumanian divisions occupied the extreme right of our line, and served their guns most manfully. Their infantry still require, as young troops will, an occasional lead from veterans, but every officer who has visited the batteries is astonished and delighted with the steadiness of the artillery. Touching the Roumanians stood the 31st Division, next the 5th, then a brigade of the 16th. Beyond them was the 30th, at Radisovo. Prince Imeritinsky on the extreme left, was forcing the Lovcha road with the 2nd Division, the 16th, a brigade of chasseurs, and 92 guns. But all these troops had been desperately thinned by previous engagements at Lovcha, though gaps are filled daily from home depôts.

The only event of Friday was a scamper of two companies who had occupied Gravitza without orders, and were immediately shelled out.

The Grand Duke arrived on the field at ten o'clock, and the Emperor took his station on a lofty observatory built for him in the Roumanian lines. Nothing so curious has been beheld since Xerxes

seated himself on high to watch the triumph of his fleet at Salamis. But modern autocrats dare not rival those of the old world, if they could. Nothing more costly than a stair carpet and a floor of sods decorated the Czar's observatory.

On Saturday morning the great redoubt was nothing the worse for the bombardment, the damage having been repaired during the night, and two more guns placed *en barbette.* The Turks had withdrawn all their troops from the intrenched camps, and a general movement to the left was visible.

All our batteries had been advanced during the night, and the hither side of each slope bristled with soldiers waiting for the order to charge. But the Turks were not a bit silenced. They kept up a tremendous fire.

All night, in bitter cold and rain, musketry fire had burst forth at intervals, and the cannonade was incessant. From my bivouac under shelter of the 12-gun battery I crept up the hill, being too wet and cold to sleep, and beheld a show of fireworks such as empires alone can afford. Nearly 250 guns blazed alternately on the slopes of the amphitheatre, which was full of lurid smoke.

The bombardment continued through Sunday and

Monday, with visible effect upon the Turkish redoubts. But it did not silence their fire, nor establish a breach in the most important works. Some redoubts were abandoned, however, and we saw the enemy removing his guns. On our side Colonel Gudim, of the 30th Division, was killed by a shell, and some ten or twelve men; about fifty were wounded, but a great number of horses were lost.

All night of Sunday troops passed my bivouac, moving from right to left, and Roumanians took their place. Four 24-pound guns (84 pounders) were placed in a battery half-a-mile to the left, commanding the Radisovo valley. All the batteries pushed closer in, and five opened fire at dawn within 800 yards of the Gravitza redoubt. That village was occupied by the Kazloff Regiment, and all the Bulgarian inhabitants were found there, with oxen, poultry, and even horses. They declared that the Turks had behaved exceedingly well towards them, doing them no harm whatever.*

* This was one of the places named as the scene of horrible atrocities. The inhabitants, however, declared that nothing had been taken from them without payment. The elder, or mayor, disconcerted a Russian officer by answering "that he would wait to see if the new-comers behaved as well as had the Turks before welcoming them."

Riding to Radisovo in search of General Krüdener's headquarters, I wandered under a shower of shells, overshot, as is the bad Turkish habit. The batteries of the Fourth Corps had been pushed over the hill, and from every side the enemy was bombarding them. Six shells burst as I traversed the small village street which runs parallel to the batteries over the hill, and fire broke out in several houses.

In that narrow valley the cannonade sounded like shattering peals of thunder. Shells from the great siege-guns hirtled like railway trains passing, and Turkish bombs whistled. Incessant was the musical hum of fragments cleaving the air.

Under the crest of the Radisovo Hill lay two regiments of the 31st Division. To the right was posted the 5th Division, and the 16th to the left. The 30th remained in reserve. General Skobeleff, who has now formal command of Prince Imeritinsky's force, was to attack the Kristine redoubt, and when this was taken it was intended that our line should charge the redoubts and batteries below them, whilst the Roumanians, supported by two Russian regiments, assaulted the Gravitza redoubt. Round the walls of that fortress nothing could be seen but smoke and fire, and nothing heard but the thud of

cannon and the whizz of shells. The Roumanians suffered considerably, and several of their guns were disabled. In an hour or two they replaced them, but evidently the bombardment had not produced the result that was expected.

But meanwhile General Skobeleff was advancing on the Lovcha road, and we faintly heard his attack from our left. At half-past four the Turks made a furious assault upon him, to cover which they opened fire upon the 30th Division. Then they pushed down the road and forced Skobeleff back from the redoubt at Kristine, which he was attacking after taking the works in front. His brigade of the 16th Division was almost annihilated, and he retired to Brestova, asking for reinforcements. It was already dusk. Two battalions which were sent to him were attacked and dispersed in the ravine. A regiment was then despatched from the Ninth Corps. In these several engagements General Skobeleff lost two thousand men.

Tuesday dawned ill. The fog hung so low that the opposite hill could scarcely be seen, and rain threatened. Leaving my bivouac in the grey dawn, I rode over the hills to Radisovo, where General Zortoff had his headquarters. We stood about,

waiting, and many officers took the opportunity to give me a line for "home," to be delivered if the worst should happen. It is dreary work waiting for a battle, but if any soldiers in the world can laugh easily, and chat without a clutching of the throat, it is the Russian. At eleven o'clock a furious fusilade began upon our extreme left, and Zortoff mounted in haste. At spot after spot he tried to get a view of the action, but everywhere he looked down upon a sea of fog. The Turks were making an assault to cover their grand attack upon Skobeleff, who was already at work. They advanced most gallantly against our batteries all along the line, keeping up an incessant crackle of musketry. Our men marched up the hill to meet them, in line and columns of companies, faintly visible through the mist.

Repulsed upon our wing, the Turks attacked Krüdener, but were again repulsed. At one o'clock the fog lifted, and we saw the minarets of Plevna glimmering like ghosts, and the great white church at the back of the town. We saw also the wounded straggling down the hill, and the ambulances moving gallantly about the field. The 30th Division had been sent on long before.

At half-past one the undaunted Turks came up again, and the roar began, louder than before. Krüdener presently arrived, and his staff were full of triumph, confident that nightfall would see us in Plevna. Presently the fire dropped away and ceased, but we did not pursue our advantage. The rain, which had long been threatening, came down in earnest, disheartening the troops, and making the deep soil slippery. The remainder of the 16th Division went out to reinforce, passing wretched sights as they defiled through the road to the left, for in the vineyards and orchards the wounded lay inches deep in the mud, and more arrived each instant.

Our attack began at last, at 3.45, and fog, smoke, and rain closed before us like a curtain. We could tell by the sound that in the first rush the Turkish intrenchments were carried, but the advance ceased, and for an hour our troops were evidently standing.

From 3 till 7 p.m. they were attempting to storm the Gravitza redoubt, but each advance was repulsed with terrific loss. One cause assigned for the disaster was that which paralysed the bravery of Sir Richard Strahan and Earl Chatham. The Russians waited for the Roumanians, and they for the Russians.

Scarcely a word is said among the group of drenched officers who sit on horseback behind Generals Zortoff and Kriloff. Occasionally they confer with Colonel Novitsky, chief of the staff, but they have no more orders to give. He always smiles and assures us that "this is nothing to Sebastopol." Behind sit the Circassian escort, muffled in black felt cloaks, their fierce eyes only visible under the hood. The ferocious effect is somewhat damaged by trickling drops of water on every nose.

I went down to the point of the vineyard and looked into the field. A hundred cannon shot I counted in three minutes from this spot. I saw a wall of smoke around the great left redoubt. Again and again black figures charged into it and vanished, or staggered out with arms spread in the panic of brave men who have seen death visible. It was no use. That throbbing furnace cannot be passed, and its flames blaze all up the valley. Breathless officers ride in, and all bring bad news. The Emperor will not have Plevna for his "birthday present!"

There is no need to recall the troops. They crowd over the hill, not flying, but abandoning the fight for this time. I also ride home through the darkness and wet, and my horse guides me to the

wretched bivouac, which I cannot find amongst the camp-fires, the blaze of cannon, and the hirtle of shells.

In the morning, however, arrives good news. Whilst we were hotly engaged all along the line, Skobeleff had stormed the Kristine redoubt, and pushing on had seized that black and formidable earthwork of which I had caught glimpses from the vineyard on our left. And late in the evening, at seven o'clock, two Russian regiments and twelve Roumanian battalions made a last attempt and carried the Gravitza redoubt, but with heavy loss. The Turks neither ran away nor asked for quarter. When Major Kvitka leaped upon the parapet he thought the place was empty, but the garrison had retired only into the galleries and casemates, where they stood at bay. The fighting inside was all with the bayonet.

The redoubt proves to be a real fortress, connected with other works strategically more important. It is not the key of the position, as had been supposed. The redoubt itself is held with difficulty, for at two hundred yards' distance a crushing fire has been poured into it all night.

The Turks immediately tried to retake the place,

but were repulsed. This morning the Roumanians made a desperate effort to take the farther redoubt, but balls thick as hail drove them back.

Early this morning the Grand Duke summoned General Zortoff to Paradim.

In the afternoon, going to seek Colonel, now General, Novitsky, by this lucky ride I became a witness of a fight as brave as the annals of war preserve. A glimpse of Captain Bolla, the Austrian attaché, galloping at breakneck speed over the brush towards Radisovo, warned me of something in view. I followed him to the new four-gun battery. There was assembled all the staff of General Zortoff breathlessly watching a struggle of heroes down below. As from the gallery of a theatre I saw that superb contest. The clouds had all gone, the rain passed away. Plevna lay beneath us in its wooded hollow. The white minarets towered above brown roofs, half hidden in acacias and fruit-trees. All round, the smooth harvest slopes bent down, with brushwood here and there in patches, yellow fields of maize, and dusky uplands. In the small plateau before the town, through which runs the Lovcha road, the low, black, ponderous redoubt was visible, like an embodied threat. Its two stories, cut by a

traverse, made it resemble old pictures of Noah's Ark stranded. Half the outline was hid by smoke—that farthest from us—and the thud of cannon, the rattle of musketry, ceased not for an instant. From the redoubt, a white highway ran up the slope, and on its right, beyond a meadow, green and marshy, lay the skirting orchards of the town. Upon this road the shells were falling thicker than one could count, each bursting with a dusky puff of smoke in the parched soil.

But fast as the shells fell, the cloud of smoke, breast high, still advanced along the road. It came forward with rushes, quick as men can run. Presently we saw dark figures, one first, then twos and threes, then an impenetrable mass, dimly seen by instants through the veil. I think we could all have cheered that foremost hero. He came alone, many yards in advance, stopped to fire, and ran on again. A score of times he was hidden by a bursting shell. He may have been not one but a succession of heroes. Perhaps he fell, but if so there was another always to take his place, far in front—always a common soldier, or armed at least with the rifle. I had time to moralise breathlessly before, of a sudden, the cloud rolled back, the heroes vanished, and nothing

remained on the white road but puffs of bursting shells, and a few black heaps upon the ground.

Zortoff's staff put down their glasses and began to talk, but a few still looked for a signal. In the orchards now smoke was arising, and upon the instant shells began to drop in the green meadow. Presently "the man" appeared again, on that side, the twos and threes after him, the mass behind. That attack was not prolonged, but before it ceased the breast-high cloud advanced along the road again, more shells dropped upon the top of those exploded, "the man" pushed forward once more, not to be turned back this time. At full speed through smoke and dust he neared the black redoubt, the others after him. They formed round it, they made a ring of fire, whilst bayonets gleamed upon the parapets. On-lookers held their breath. The fight continued in a whirl of smoke. Steel glistened on the upper deck, if it may be thus described. For ten minutes we knew not how the desperate fight had gone. Some cried, "Skobeleff has lost the place!" some "He holds it yet!"

There was always that ring of fire about the earthwork. Suddenly it broke up. The gallant Turks fired till they dropped; but Skobeleff had

repulsed the fifth attack, and in a few minutes arrived his messenger, with that good news, but warning Zortoff that the next attack would be fatal if reinforcements did not arrive. With that I went home, for all was quiet. And in half-an-hour, no reinforcements having come, Skobeleff blew up his guns and cut his way out through the advancing Turks at an awful sacrifice.

The losses of the Russians since last Friday are not less than ten thousand, besides nearly two thousand in the attack by Skobeleff on the Kristine redoubt on Monday, and as many in facing the Turkish advance of that evening. The succession of attacks and counter-attacks on Tuesday cost him three thousand more, and in the redoubts his troops were literally cut to pieces. Skobeleff estimates the weakening of his force at eight thousand. Kriloff, of the Fourth Corps, lost between three thousand and three thousand five hundred in the unsuccessful assault which is now officially called "a false demonstration." Besides this, the Roumanians lost between two and three thousand.

The Russians have made an immense mistake in trying to make a Bulgarian Sedan. They err in supposing that the Turks will capitulate when

surrounded. In the redoubt at Gravitza they neither asked for mercy nor ran, but stopped to kill until they were killed.

Many more lives will be lost, I venture to predict, before the last Turk ceases to fight at Plevna, and all will have been wasted.

Winter is on us, not without warning. The last few nights and mornings have been bitterly cold. The weather is such as English people only know in December.

BUCHAREST, *Sept.* 16.

I am told that some indignation against me prevails at headquarters. Our guide, philosopher, and friend there, Colonel von Hassenkampf, of the St. Petersburg police, pleasantly complained the last time I saw him that of all the correspondents I am the one whose acquaintance he has had least opportunity to cultivate. But if my visits to headquarters have been few and brief, at least they have been pleasant. In his straightforward way the Grand Duke Nicholas has shown me kindness, and the officers of his staff have been most obliging. I am sorry if remarks of mine have given them offence. Without knowing what is exactly the charge against me, I may venture

to assert that no personal accusation or inuendo can be brought forward, and for the rest my duty lies toward the English public. A man must tell the truth so far as he knows it; and if it be disagreeable to persons whom he esteems, he may regret, but he cannot alter, the fact.*

I am making these remarks because it seems likely that before I have set down the thoughts now occupying my mind more offence may unintentionally be given. But the moment has gone by for making things smooth, and the moment has not yet come—if it ever do—for suppressing the bitter part of truth out of sympathy for brave men hardly beset.

Utterly unable to find a messenger, good or bad, in the neighbourhood of Plevna, I waited with im-

* I wrote these lines after hearing of the extraordinary questions addressed by Colonel von Hassenkampf to two of my colleagues, to which reference has been made in the first chapter. They are reproduced only to show that my expulsion had been thought of, if not decided, long before it took place. Had my colleagues given the slightest encouragement to the idea of espionage, that would have been the pretext, no doubt. As they ridiculed it, another charge was sought. But how far removed from the ideas of Western Europe must be those of the Russian staff when officials can even hope to see one journalist betray another into their hands. What manner of men did they take us for, these princes and generals who were so frank and kindly? And what manner of men are we to think *them?*

patience a decisive moment in the struggle which would release me for a few hours to carry a despatch. That moment seemed to have come when I had witnessed Skobeleff's triumphant repulse of five attacks from the enemy in the great eastern redoubt. The Turks all withdrew from sight; the staff of General Zortoff mounted and went home; we all exchanged congratulations, and Colonel, now General, Novitsky took me by the arm to discuss the prospects of Europe under the new leadership of the *jeunesse Slave.*

With all, in short, who watched the engagement, I believed it over and done. It did not seem to be possible that with forty thousand men within five miles—forty thousand after the amplest allowance for loss—in positions which the Turkish army could no more take than could the Russian their redoubts, that the great earthworks won by Skobeleff could be allowed to fall again. I drove away to announce Plevna doomed: and whilst I travelled the "situation" turned topsy-turvy. I can now make for myself a sort of explanation. The five attacks were conducted, as I have described, in straggling order; quick as the enemy was repulsed he came on again. But the Turkish commander saw this would not do.

For the sixth assault he prepared more seriously; and whilst every one thought the struggle over—whilst I was trotting towards Simnitz—he made a last desperate effort, and succeeded.

One would be carrying a wholesome law to the brink of stupidity if one longer ignored a fact which comes up whenever Skobeleff's name is mentioned. Matters which I neither know nor care about have raised such bitter enmity against this young general as for years kept him from the imperial favour. Indian Russophobes, if such exist at present, may be pleased to hear that "Turkistan officer" was an expression of contempt and dislike, used with prudence, however, in military circles about the Court. Of Turkistan officers Skobeleff was the chief beyond contradiction; the most brilliant personally, the ablest, most popular—a very representative of the dashing fellows who built up Russia's empire in the central East.

I have a holy dread of "personal" writing. The deeds of a public man belong to history, and, in consequence, to journalists; but his looks, manners, habits, and behaviour should be sacred as those of the meanest citizen. But I conceive that General Skobeleff the younger, if he lives, is destined to fill

a great part; and though that be no logical excuse, it explains why I cannot resist the temptation to make a sketch of him.

He belongs to the *noblesse*, and his connections, both by birth and marriages in his family, are most important. His age, I suppose, may be thirty-five at the outside: it is said to be thirty-three. In face and look of eye he shows the type in which men recognise instinctively a leader. Perfectly fair, with moustache and whiskers trimmed in our fashion; bold, high features, blue eyes as keen as an old Viking's, he would pass anywhere for a brilliant officer of the English service. His smile is full of raillery, and his speech has a reckless frankness that would certainly not tend to conciliate a foe. Skobeleff is decidedly not a man to be described as guileless. But all the bitter knowledge of the world which has been taught him has not killed, I think, a certain manly trust in others. His only weapon is the sabre. That scorn of life which he shows on each occasion—a sheer love of danger for its own sake—is not confined only to the battlefield. For Skobeleff is not only a soldier; he has been the successful Governor of Khokand, which he subdued. His talents and his knowledge are conspicuous; and

I believe that the same quick wit, fearless spirit, and swift determination would have earned him triumph in any line of life.

But as a soldier it is that we have to regard him; and here, I think, some distinction should be made. He came to the war unattached; and if his father had not obtained command of a cavalry division, this fine soldier, the idol of the Asian army, might have remained without employment.

Such a position was enough to rouse a cooler spirit to indignation, and we heard of some mad pranks more fit for war in the fifteenth century than in the nineteenth. The most extraordinary of these were carried to the Emperor, with improvements. Skobeleff swam the Danube on horseback, to show it could be done; but the story sent abroad was that he forced a whole sotnia of Cossacks to swim with him, and that all were drowned. The truth is that this young general displays such regard for a soldier's life as might well be imitated by his potent, grave, and reverend disparagers. In the bold reconnaissances about Lovcha many men were lost, but his orders were imperative to ascertain the Turkish force as nearly as might be. These orders he performed to admiration, and when the necessary

work was finished he exposed his own life with a recklessness beyond easy precedent, in order to recall his troops, who mistook a demonstration for a real attack.

In this affair he had two horses killed under him, making, I think, five since the opening of the campaign; it was straightway circulated that he shot them with his own revolver. A more recent history I may mention—one that is told around camp-fires, and contributes to raise still higher the pedestal upon which Skobeleff already stands in the soldier's simple view. In one of the forays or reconnaissances, or what you please to call them, around Plevna, his Cossacks suffered much from thirst. They breasted a high ridge—I know it well—and saw below them a delicious spring, stone-faced and cisterned, as are all springs near the highway in that Turkish land which they tell us is so brutal and so far behind the age. The General cried for water, but his Cossacks pointed out how thick the Turkish bullets were pitting the slope below, and how they pattered round the spring. Skobeleff leapt down, and slowly talking over his shoulder with the trusty captain who has followed him for love from Turkistan—his name I am sorry to forget

at this moment—very slowly he walked to the cistern, took a long drink and then another, washed his face and hands, shouting to his officers how sweet and cool was the water. I know this sounds like fanfaronade, though of the best sort; yet I think that if everything could be told that bears upon the subject, even such acts would be recognised as neither injudicious nor uncalled for at present. However that be, the story goes on to tell that Skobeleff's Cossacks were mad to see their idol thus run into danger which they seemed to shirk. They clambered out of their forked saddles as swiftly as men can disengage themselves from such a clumsy apparatus, and pressed forward. In the tones of real anger which are perfectly recognised by the followers of this good-humoured general, Skobeleff ordered them back, and put under arrest—not a nominal punishment—those who had ventured to risk their lives a few feet in the direction which he had traversed.

This is the camp story; another is told in the "upper circles." I could not myself doubt which represents the truth. The General's knowledge of English speech, and liking of things English—saving our policy alone—have brought him into

close relationship with correspondents here. We know him well, and I regard him as the one soldier whom Russia has visibly at command.

And he was beaten out, for want of reinforcements, of the forts so gallantly won. He waited till the last moment before blowing up his works and guns; only in the middle of the night two regiments came up. So the story goes, and if it be challenged I have no means of ascertaining where truth lies. Thus we come round to the subject with which I began this letter. English journalists, if not connected with prints that advocate the ideas of Russia, are treated with extreme courtesy, but are refused information. I do not say that orders have been issued to that effect, or that silence is officially enjoined in any way. Nor should I think of imputing blame if such orders had been given, for surely Russians are as free as others to confide in whom they will. But if information be thus refused, I conceive it illogical to pay such close attention to our writings, to feel sore when we make mistakes—in short, to exact bricks that shall please their eye without furnishing the straw.

It will be said that Colonel von Hassenkampf is specially detailed to give information to corre-

spondents, and that he fulfils his duty impartially. Without questioning that for one instant—for I have no means of knowing how *confrères* are supplied with news—I would observe that this courteous and amiable officer, whom all must like, has never given me more valuable hints than are contained in the official despatches; and as he dwells at headquarters whilst I run about the front, I have had the pleasure of waiting on him not half-a-dozen times since the war began. Perhaps—I am not sure—but perhaps if things were going well, generals and chiefs of staff in the field might be a little more communicative—might confide in one, for instance, the true facts of an event seven days old. As it is, my scope of vision is just as far as my field-glasses range.

The comments of the army become louder and more reckless as mistake is piled on mistake. Strangely enough, I hear that the Emperor has become much more cheerful since things have grown so bad. But he is the only man who has found a "precious jewel in the head" of this adversity. One might fill pages in repeating the angry talk to be heard. I chance to know upon indisputable authority, that for all which has come and gone since Plevna first was discovered the general staff refused on the eve of

the last battle to credit their enemy with more than twenty-five thousand men. That figure was burnt into the official brain, as one may say, and efforts to remove it were angrily resented. To this delusion in great measure the catastrophe is owing.

The conduct of the battle, like the number of the foe, was regulated by fixed and unalterable law. Three o'clock had been named as the hour of attack, and though the Turks unexpectedly began a furious assault at eleven, which was repulsed with a loss that must for a while have discouraged them —though rain began to fall, making the ground slippery, and the dense fog began to thicken, that mystic hour was still awaited. Our men cooled, had time to count their losses, and to shudder at the sight around. Wet chilled them to the bone, the dull, raw air oppressed their imaginations. The enemy recovered heart, seeing that no result followed his check. So far as I can understand or see, we were waiting for nothing but the clock. But even when the hour came round there was a long delay for I know not what, and others were as ignorant as I.

At 3.45 the advance began, in a fog so extremely thick that the formation of those attacking could

scarcely be known by the men themselves. For the most part they moved in column or columns of companies. I am told of a battalion which thus assaulted a redoubt, and on repulse slowly withdrew in the same order. This is fine, but it is not modern war. I was much interested to observe the calmness of Generals Zortoff and Kriloff, the latter of whom has taken the former's place as commandant of the Fourth Corps. They sat upon their horses in a battery, surveying with attention unwearied the sea of mist before them. My field-glasses, which appear to be reliable, could tell nothing of what might be happening behind that barrier. The generals, I suppose, were better provided, since they seemed content to rest upon the evidence of their *lorgnettes*. But, upon the other hand, I became doubtful of their prudence in recollecting that my glasses alone described the soldiers retreating down Radisovo hill.

It is certainly not needful for a commander to go risking his life like a subaltern, doing in his old age the dangerous service of which successful performance in his youth has brought the *otium* with the *dignitas*. But all day long behind our generals, drenched and dull and anxious, sat a score of subalterns, eager, I doubt not, to win crosses and to see

the battle. From time to time one galloped off with a message, or one came in with an answer, panting and excited; but there were never less than fifteen sitting idly in the saddle. A few of these officers despatched into the mist skirting the hill in front of us, behind which raged the battle, might have given more intelligence than the best possible field-glasses or the most conscientious use of them could supply. I am sure the staff was eager to go, and I am sure the generals were eager for intelligence; but these two factors were not put together, and so they brought out no result.

The next morning, about ten o'clock, I was picking the leg of a tough fowl bought for threepence from the folks, oppressed and massacred, you know, of Gravitza—who swindled me badly in the transaction according to market rates—when I saw General Zortoff and all his staff riding past my bivouac at a sharp pace. I caught the hindmost, and learned with surprise that the Grand Duke had summoned his commander to a conference at Paradim, seven miles away. It seemed to me strange, and to others also, that in such a crisis the officer commanding movements of the last importance should be taken from his charge. The

Turks might very probably attack—they did so, in point of fact, with uncomfortable results, in the afternoon—and the Russian general might have seen his way to a manœuvre on which all would turn; but at this grave moment, instead of watching them like a cat, he was caracolling at the summons of his superior several miles on the back trail. Doubtless the Grand Duke had good cause to wish a conference; but in such cases Mahomet does best to go to the mountain, for fear of a general disturbance if the mountain should set out towards him.

There are a few other thoughts I would fain put on record whilst the memory of them is fresh in my mind—some notes of extended interest from sketches which concern me personally, yet have their value in a picture. But my despatch is already long enough. The moral it should convey will not be new to readers who have looked with some attention at the lessons of this war. It is the old condemnation of autocratic government. Here, in Bucharest, I have heard much surprise at the cheerfulness of Russian officers; in the field, though the officers are not cheerful by any means, they seem in all ranks to be unconscious of responsibility. Things are bad —let somebody give orders that they be set right.

"Somebody" regulates our lives from the cradle to the grave; we have no voice in any matter; "somebody" sent us here, and "somebody" has got us into this mess. It is "somebody's" business to get us out again. We may see plainly that things are wrong, and may be angry about it; but the step between that consciousness and the impulse to be ourselves up and stirring in the effort to set things right is a very long one in Russia, and has never yet been taken. "God and the Czar" have charge of us; what shall individuals do when they fail?

CHAPTER X.

THE LINES OF THE CZAREWITCH.

GOR MONASTYR, *Sept.* 22.

AFTER a brief glance at civilisation I have returned to torture, like a ghost at cock-crow. At Simnitz we leave behind all men and women of like fashion with ourselves, who understand the wants of a civilised being, can sympathise with his little miseries, and rejoice in his small joys. On the other side of the bridge we find the man-animal, to whom all things, save brute wants and brute desires, are unknown. My first view of Bulgaria revisited shows me a burly, unwashed creature, clumsily and sullenly rolling himself into the monstrous *cummerbund* which wraps his waist. He has put one end under a stone, and gyrates up to it. Near, but apart, sit a score of Roumanian teamsters—long-haired, quick-eyed, dressed in homespun linen. Strange it is to observe that after all these centuries the southern colonists introduced by Trajan continue

to dress in linen, winter and summer; whilst the Bulgars and Serbs, coming from the north no long time after, still wear cumbrous woollen clothes throughout the year. Which dress is more unsuitable or more uncomfortable if worn through heat and cold alike one could not easily determine, and that each people should persistently follow the custom of its ancestors is a curious example of instinctive conservatism.

I am afraid that the Bulgar is not happy in making friends; Russians without exception—save in the official class, who hold their tongues—speak of him with great bitterness, and the Roumanian contempt is not to be told in words. He seems to stand, like the fellow I saw, all alone, stolidly enwrapping his very dirty personage in folds of selfishness and falsehood, weighted by stupidity. I should like to sympathise with the Bulgar—so would all of us. We all did before we saw him, and many, many thousands have died for his sake; but the view is disenchanting.

The lines of the Heir Apparent have fallen in pleasant places, if any there be betwixt the Danube and the Balkans. I admit with the greatest pleasure that both country and population here are better

looking, more advanced, and more agreeable generally than in South or West Bulgaria. The country is far from picturesque, and the people are far from handsome; but there is improvement. For the first time, and only once, have I beheld that pleasant homestead which a late traveller describes as typical—an Austrian count I refer to, whose name escapes me.

At Novigrad, by the Jantra, I found that happy family. After riding by many hovels, many mud walls and underground dwellings, I hit upon it. The evidences of rude plenty were abundant as usual on my way;—they never fail. Yards full of hayricks thatched with flags, wheat-stacks covered all over with oak-boughs, cattle, buffaloes, horses trampling out the corn, pigs half-wild, poultry, geese, and turkeys — these everywhere appeared; but the houses were such as I have often described. From their roofs, which bear a harvest of parched weeds and grass, big dogs leapt down to rush at me. The men slouched silently along, the women scarcely glanced at a passer-by.

Conceive my astonishment to discover in such a scene the ideal homestead. I drove through its fence of thorns, and found a neat inclosure for the cattle; through another fence, and the picture lay

before me. On one side the cottage of paterfamilias, clean and decent—women spinning on its stoop, men busy with the farm gear. Four smaller cottages around the space were occupied by sons-in-law, and children abounded. All welcomed the stranger—not gratuitously; but in this land a welcome is the rarest thing, though it be paid for. The women brought me mats and pillows, one girl actually ran to fetch me water. Well might my courier observe, with frank amazement, "These people seem pleased to see us!" It was a sight not again to be hoped for. I feel confident that the Austrian traveller made his sketch in that very courtyard.

My friend of the chemical department who received that perplexing order to disinfect the neighbourhood of the Schipka Pass told me that his methods had transformed Biela into very Hygeia. I do not doubt him; but a Russian army corps would foil all the chemists in existence. The last state of Biela is worse than the first. Such green pools of filth would swallow a river of disinfectants. Fresh layers of poisonous dirt have been laid upon the acids and chlorides. Biela also is dull. No stately old generals potter along, glad to exchange gossip with a wanderer from the outside world;

no Circassians, scarlet or blue of shirt, lead horses prancing in cloths embroidered with an imperial crown. Jeames or Tummus does not take the air, in neat dark livery, silver chain, and cigarette. All is dull as dirty, and one hastens to the wretched market-tender, where abominations are served worthy of the place, with knives and forks unwashed, on a greasy board, by a ruffian who eats garlic and smokes alternately.

The headquarters of the Czarewitch—a title, by-the-by, unused in Russia, as indeed is "Czar" itself—lie at Gor Monastyr, some seven or eight miles north-east of Biela. The road thither would be very pretty if the hills were clothed with timber instead of brush, and green were not all burnt out of the landscape. The country rolls like a ploughed field. Steep little valleys between each height evidently bear a little torrent in the rainy season, which is close upon us. Large barrows, always circular, dot the hilltops; some of them have been dug and carved into most formidable works, with a spiral approach to the upper battery. But all the country side is trenched and pitted, as though on each little ridge a stand is to be made against the pursuing Moslem.

A mile from headquarters one sees upon the right Dol Monastyr, a tiny village marked by tall brushwood, which from the distance looks like trees. Here stands the largest and neatest camp I have yet beheld, upon a slope between woods and water. Its tents, accurately disposed, please the eye, and its lines of artillery are downright picturesque.

The Czarewitch dwells on a small plateau, half-way down the slope that leads to Gor Monastyr village—I have not yet discovered any convent or monastic building in the neighbourhood to account for its name. A square of neat tents by the roadside surrounds the large marquee in which officers sit and dine. The quarters of his Highness, too, very simple tents, stand in a corner. Some fine walnut-trees give a pleasant sylvan air to the camp. Scores of horses, dozens of carriages, are ranged at the back, tea is always boiling, servants are running, Cossacks are leading horses to and fro. Just opposite, across the road, dwells the commandant, with the guard attached to him. In this official I had the pleasure to recognise General Zumbaieff, who had charge of the bridge when first constructed. It is long ago, but I think your readers heard of some droll adventures that befell me in trying to fulfil my promise

towards the General in conveying to him a bottle of the good wine which we called Turkish—a cellar long exhausted, alas! His Excellency recollected so well my exertions that he descended to offer me a special welcome.

Going to the tent of General Ivanovsky, in the sacred inclosure, I was received by the chief of the staff with that courtesy so universal that one exception only dwells in my mind. The army of the Czarewitch can do nothing but await the Turkish attack, and as that will almost certainly be delayed by the rains, I propose a run across to Gor Studen tomorrow, to hear, and if necessary to see, how the siege of Plevna progresses. The late action at Cerkovna is not supposed to show an intention on the enemy's part of moving immediately. There only do the Russian lines still rest upon the right bank of the Lom, and the Turks, it is likely, wished no more than to drive them across. With General Ivanovsky I found Colonel Doctouroff, *sous chef d'état majeure* with his Highness, who most kindly offered me a bed in his tent, and, what was more truly Samaritan, food for my horses.

Colonel Doctouroff is one of the few Panslavists to be found in the Russian army. A large majority of

officers—amongst those able to think at all—entertain a pardonable belief that the supreme design of the Creator was accomplished when he had perfectioned the Russ. To us of the outside world this idea may be amusing, but it contains no special harm. Panslavism is a different matter, for its essence lies in the disruption of Europe. All Russians outside the Court circle are innocent of that earth-hunger which prevails within. As they think their race to be that specially favoured by Heaven, so they think the borders of their country to have been traced by providential care. Whilst the race was maturing, it was also spreading on the lands destined for it—westward, that is. The acme of excellence is now reached, and the destined limits are attained. Even those who would annex Bulgaria protest against admitting its people to equality. "We are pure gold," said Prince Dolgoruki to me, "and can you think that we would alloy ourselves with such dross?" Panslavism, therefore, is discredited even by those who most enthusiastically believe, in the memorable words of M. Ristics, "*que la jeunesse Slave est destinée à renouveler le sang épuisé de l'Europe.*"

Colonel Doctouroff holds another view. He agrees with the Servian prime minister. For that

opinion he has fought and toiled, until, as he said to me, "I almost feel sick of war." Two years now he has been in the field, with the Bosnian rebels, with the Servians, with the Grand Army. His faith is not shaken, but flesh is weak. The disasters of the campaign appear to Colonel Doctouroff a visible manifestation of Diabolos. The purpose of the Almighty is self-evident, but the demons have thwarted Him. Of course things will come right ultimately, and Holy Russia must go on till the world and devil be vanquished. In the meanwhile her task is hard. Colonel Doctouroff is not perhaps a soldier born, but having accepted that profession, he follows it with patient and thoughtful science. Of such men, I fancy, is the great German strategist—a gentle, kindly, conscientious student, who brings to the art of killing just these same qualities that carry one to success in medicine, in law, and in literature. Colonel Doctouroff has great influence already with the Czarewitch, and the time draws near when such as he must come visibly to the front. Whatever dignity he attain, all who know will heartily rejoice to congratulate him.

The utmost kindness of my host could not get me

a dinner in the sacred precincts, and I sought the *Marketender* of the place. Upon returning from thence the sentries refused to let me pass, as was to be expected; and since no superior officer chanced to go by, without disappointment I resought a house where heaps of straw in the courtyard promised a soft bed.

This house is inhabited by the head coachman of his Imperial Highness. If there be any natural owners, any Bulgars or such, they are overshadowed to extinction. The coachman is too large to bear a rival authority where he dwells. But he has a good heart, and I am confident he makes the proprietor welcome, as he does me. The hugest of black kettles is set boiling for my tea on the tallest bonfire of the camp. Wood has no value for my host, who likes a blaze to sing and dance by. He puts it on by the stack-load, and roars good-natured abuse at his assistant if the central flame drops below a level of three feet. Upon a bed of embers round, this ragged rascal — the assistant — cooks strange dishes and tends the kettle, while his master in a shed near by bawls a selection from the 'Belle Hélène,' or a jovial chorus of his native land.

Presently his soul is stirred to dance, and he leaps

like a bear round the cheerful blaze. A burly, braided, unkempt Jehu is he, in *cafton* of figured calico, wide velvet breeches, and half-knee boots. Towards nine o'clock, watching these antics with much delight, I begin to wonder if he will ever sup or go to sleep. There are no signs as yet, for he has just despatched his underling with two huge bottles to an unknown store for *vodka.* Lo! a sound of wheels outside—a roar of welcome from Jehu—and the Prince's carriage arrives, with four beautiful black horses, half-a-dozen grandee coachmen belonging to the staff, and two Cossacks handsome as Greek heroes. I know the coachmen to be real grandees by their bonnets encircled with peacock feathers. The welcome is loud and warm; the snatches of song succeed without interruption as these gentry talk and warm themselves at the fire. But my coachman rules the feast. His *chansons* are evidently more effective—no one can dance as he can. The Cossacks meanwhile stand apart, draped in their cloaks, and smile only at the broadest fun. Presently arrives the *vodka;* the mysterious dishes are declared ready, and all withdraw to the shed. Then whilst they eat they sing; whilst they drink they chatter and sing again. A fig for the Turk

and the rain, which compels me to hide my head in a waterproof and give up listening. There is a quarrel, of course, after some hours, and I wake to see somebody thrust bodily out of the courtyard. The fire is still blazing, and the ragged assistant crouched beside it. The last I hear of that jovial crew is a rattling lilt from the coachman, so full of fun and life that it gives me a merry dream, and I wake up laughing—to see the courtyard grey and silent, the rain falling silently upon my bed of hay, and a giant Cossack asleep by my side, half naked.

From Gor Monastyr I rode to Gorny-Studen, and there met with the adventures detailed in "The story of my expulsion." After leaving Colonel von Hassenkampf, Colonel Polivano kindly and cheerfully led me to his tent, where I was introduced to my—what shall I call him?—let us say my travelling companion, Colonel Loupojano. He was rather bewildered by his functions, as well he might be. Then we all tramped through the mud and rain to breakfast.

Colonel Loupojano, like most gentlemen of Roumania, does not care to ride when a vehicle can be found. Vehicles at Gorny-Studen are plentiful, but none for hire. Then I saw how it profits one sometimes to keep on familiar terms with a *Marketender*,

and to shake hands, furtively but cordially, with his waiters. The vagrant Marseillais who retailed to us a mercenary hospitality would not have lent his cart for money, but he offered it in sheer love for a real colonel who treated him in this unusual manner. The cart was not beautiful, nor swift, nor strong. Its tilt was ripped, and the fluttering fragments were knotted together; it had no springs, the pole was split, and part of the side had broken away. The horses might have figured beside George Stubbs's happiest examples of anatomy. But it seemed possible the thing would hold together as far as Sistova, and Colonel Loupojano preferred to risk it.

Stretched upon a bed of hay, he invited me to take place beside him, and with a wistful glance at my saddle I submitted. A soldier-servant sat in the hay upon our feet, and a big dragoon trotted behind. Thus we set out.

Had not things quite otherwise important happened to me, I should have written before this the adventures and misfortunes which obliged me to send my waggon back, with oxen, to be laid up in Bucharest till next year; so deep was the mud on this same road two days before, and in the interval

rain had scarcely ceased. Imagine, therefore, our progress, with the anatomical steeds, in a country cart. After two or three *versts* I could bear no longer to see the lash gyrating like a machine, to hear the cruel swish of its descent, and to feel the laboured drag of our wheels through clay a foot in thickness. Taking it on me to call out one of the half-dozen words that make my Bulgarian vocabulary, the cart stopped, and I invited my guardian to mount. At the same moment I clambered through the broken side, my invaluable courier brought me a horse, and before the Colonel, whom I did not then understand, could form an objection, I had the saddle between my knees.

But this case was foreseen. The bold dragoon pushed up, and I observed that his horse was quite a match for mine, which had already travelled a hundred and twenty miles in three days. The man himself possessed a face and build which I should describe the most politely possible by the epithet "uncompromising." Russia has a large choice of such individuals. He eyed me stolidly and sternly, as one who could not hope to argue with the prisoner, but who knew his duty and meant to do it. As I had no intention of running away, I could laugh

at his honest, ugly, suspicious beard, and I did so. Colonel Loupojano, at his length in the hay, evidently did not care whether I escaped or no.

We set forward again, I taking a malicious pleasure in circling round, climbing heights, losing the track, and cutting off corners. But the dragoon stuck to me with that silent and threatening vigilance which one sees in a bulldog's eye when he cannot make up his mind about a stranger. The horse which my courier rode has a nervous habit of kicking when another horse comes too near. I did not wish to see the ruffian's legs broken, and I warned him that if he hung so close he or his handsome grey would certainly get hurt. He answered gruffly, "Nischevo," and fell not an inch behind. My little horse watched its opportunity, and planted a vicious kick. With a rear and a plunge off went the handsome grey, full gallop, half a mile or so to the right, the bold dragoon swearing and tearing, his eyes full of mud, his coat bellying, "long sword, saddle, bridle," and all the rest thumping uncomfortably.

Meanwhile we took a gallop on our own account, and pursued our course along the valley unseen from above. After half an hour's march the dragoon

found us. His face was beetroot and his blue eyes actually swelled, but he said nothing, though he "looked a heap." Again I warned him with extreme politeness—as if he had found no cause to remark it before—that my servant's horse kicked. He growled, blew, and came closer; out went the heels, off went the grey, and for half-an-hour we were again lost to sight of the authorities.

So the merry ride went on, our dragoon coming back after each excursion, his obstinacy in approaching only equalled by the steady persistence of my horse in kicking. Though he returned each time redder if possible, and with silent demonstrations of more offence, I could hardly believe that he did not see the fun. But my courier, who exchanged a very few words with him now and then when he paid us a short visit, disappointed me by asserting that he did not like the jest at all. I saw myself that he several times escaped a broken leg more narrowly than most of us would wish; but he never spoke to me, nor protested, only recommenced the same stupid proceedings.

At Carevica (pronounced Sarévo) Colonel Loupojano waited until I came circuitously round to him. How well did I recollect that miserable village, now

full of imperial lancers! Here, at the beginning of July, the Grand Duke first halted; here I first had the honour of an introduction to him; here I dwelt in a wood of orchard trees, long since cut down for burning. Those were the merry times of the campaign, when we supposed ourselves *en route* for Constantinople, sunshine and flowers on our path. Here we pranced and caracoled; how indignant should we have been at a mere hint of retracing our steps through mud a foot deep, with horses worn out, our minds employed in speculating whether to hold or not to try and hold the country beyond Sistova! The pleasures of hope were with us then —we scorned the vanity of human wishes; the pleasures of memory are all that remain, and they give a bitter joy.

But I was really delighted to find that the *Marketender's* cart had travelled so far. No horses that preserved any self-respect at all could have endured the cruelties which drove them through that mud. The road was lined with carcases of brutes that had simply died. My amiable and bewildered guardian summoned me, and the dragoon, just returned from one of his excursions, viewed me with eyes cocked, as though to say, "Only refuse, and give me a

chance!" The fun had been much too good for a violent ending, and I took my place again on the hay—avenging myself only by cross-questioning the Colonel as to the international law which enabled Russian Grand Dukes to exile a foreigner from Roumanian ground. The Colonel grew warm upon this point, and vowed that I should stop in Bucharest for ever if I chose. No written order had been given him; only a message for M. Cogalniceano, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

It was long after dark when we plodded through the breakneck ways of Sistova, conduits of soft mud. Little chance of bed was there, for the people with whom I had stopped hitherto were all prostrate with typhus. No resident would open his door at night. My amiable guardian was quite lost in this state of things. The incredible condition of his boots oppressed him like a hideous vision, and the unwonted prospect of a night without bed upset all the faculties of his mind. Discovering a French suttler, he blankly seated himself with that individual, and gave up the universe for lost upon hearing that he could not sleep in the shanty. I meanwhile secured a promise of two tables in a restaurant near by when the revellers should have dispersed. Bringing my

pleasant guardian to this refuge, he showed gratitude or acquaintance by shaking hands with every waiter.

The restaurant, by-the-bye, occupied the house of that cadi who boldly stopped here, with his wives, when all the people ran away, as I mentioned before. He was appointed member of the municipal council. But for all that, and twice as much as all that, his colleagues have let his good house to M. Guichard, of Bucharest. They take credit to themselves for allowing him a corner, two tiny rooms that reek with the filth outside.

I took pains to verify this fact, for it seems to me pregnant. General Ignatieff published to all the world the cadi's appointment to office; but the little fact that he is turned out of house and home is not so generally advertised. I understand too that the building was his own private property.

M. Guichard is trying to repair the damage caused by plunderers. No one in Sistova will work any more at handycrafts. The loot of the Turkish quarter made all their fortunes. When, at an enormous cost, M. Guichard has restored the damage, he will expect to be repaid at the expiration of his lease. So he tells me, and M. Guichard looks like a

man of his word. Is the cadi, then, to be ruined and to pay for the repairs in addition?

It was a dreary pull through the mud next day, among horses and oxen dying in harness, carts jammed like flies in honey, flourishing whips, wild yells, and oaths. At Simnitza I breakfasted with General Skobeleff, who was accompanying General Todleben to Plevna. General Skobeleff invited me to breakfast, and we had a last merry meal in one of the funny little *markt tents* which line every street, alternately with peddling clothiers, stationers, cutlers, and most "general" dealers. I congratulated my host upon his promotion, which no man in history has better earned. We talked of war and policy, with many a laugh between, but I "made a bull's-eye" with one light remark. "The worst of it all is, General," I said, "that you must give up that hope of entering Delhi at the head of your Cossacks!" "That's it!" he answered, with a quaint laugh in his handsome blue eyes which his friends know so well; and he emphasised the statement with an expression dear to sailors, *teste* Charles Reade. General Skobeleff has nearly recovered his good spirits and pleasant humour, and is again the dashing *sabreur* whose

acquaintance I made in Bucharest five months ago.

At Simnitza, with great fuss and noise, a carriage was requisitioned for us. As always happens, somehow, it was the worst in the yard. I had put myself in communication with the driver of the best, but my guardian insisted upon travelling in the one requisitioned. I thought, at least, that we should get it for a mere nothing, and submitted: great, therefore, was my disgust when Colonel Loupojano casually remarked that we should have to pay for these wretched screws just as dearly as the handsome team for which I had been contracting. "Why then put your dread powers into force?" I asked. So far as I understood the drowsy explanation, it is imposed by the *convenances* upon persons of a certain rank to travel in vehicles requisitioned.

At Petrosani I was summoned by my custodian, now my friend, to see a disagreeable incident. The prefect called on him to sign a *procés verbal* registering the complaints of a whole crowd of peasants who had assembled before his house. They accused the Russians quartered there, and especially the sailors, of wholesale mischief and larceny. They appear to have pillaged the country-side, cut down

fruit-trees, and torn up hedges for firewood, drunk the people's wine, ruined their crops, and knocked them about. They came to the prefect for redress, but he could only pass on their grievances a stage further. Delayed by this affair, we did not catch the evening train at Giurgevo, and passed another night without bed in the waiting-room of the station. It was a perilous ride after nightfall. We had forded the Vede luckily by daylight, and got through safe amongst several waggons overturned. The rude bridge there is nearly finished.

After some narrow escapes Malo was reached, and here two peasants, watching for that purpose, gave us information that the road was actually impassable beyond. By a long detour we rounded the dangerous stretch, and gained Giurgevo with whole bones. At Bucharest my colonel gave up his official functions, and dined with me as a friend. He had been most kind and agreeable; I have none but pleasant memories of my captivity; but for all time I shall speculate blindly why he should have shaken hands with this waiter also before sitting down to my modest banquet. In nine days I had not found an opportunity to take off my clothes, having indeed none to change, and only twice had removed

my boots. The luxury of Bucharest appears delicious under such circumstances.

Up to this the Roumanian authorities have made no sign. It may be that Colonel Loupojano has not felt it necessary to deliver a mere message given him by a foreign prince. Any way, my movements are apparently uncontrolled. Russian and native friends show a redoubled cordiality which I could not understand until this evening, when two officers of high birth and most distinguished service stopped me in the Podoi Mogosoi, our Regent Street, and loudly declared, whilst shaking hands, that all the Russian army was grateful to your dismissed correspondent.

BUCHAREST, *Wednesday.*

General Gourko has started away on the Sofia road, with eleven regiments of cavalry, Russian and Roumanian, besides Cossacks, and eight batteries of horse artillery. Four regiments of cavalry of the Guard will join him on the road by way of Tirnova and Selvie. The object probably is to cut off Osman Pasha from his supports, and prevent more convoys from reaching him.

Several correspondents, both English and Russian,

have been invited to leave the army, lest a worse fate befall them. At this moment only two remain, English or foreign, out of sixty who received permission. The strictest orders have been given that no person shall be allowed to visit the positions of the army, and they are so interpreted as to confine the correspondents to the villages in the rear.

The fact is that the state of the army now is such as the authorities will keep secret at any cost. Eye-witnesses tell me that thousands of helpless soldiers are lying on the bare earth, in the bitter cold and wet weather that now prevails. The hospitals are choked with the wounded men. Trains of sick are passing to the Danube by a thousand carts at a time, and are forwarded by rail to the frontier; but more still apply to the doctors on the spot, who are overworked and discontented.

It has been said that the Russians are used to an extreme climate, and that they are not likely, therefore, to suffer so much as the Turks. This is a mistake. The Russians of all classes live as much indoors as possible, and warm their houses by stoves in the winter, going out only when they are obliged, and returning to a kind of Turkish bath when their work is done. No mode of existence

could give them a worse training for the kind of life they must expect before Plevna.

Snow has already fallen throughout Moldavia, and there has been a slight frost for the last two nights.

A friend gives me a curious account of the arrival, of the infantry of the Guard at Jassy. We saw them as they marched through Bucharest, the most superb troops in the world; but then they had only come two miles. Jassy beheld them after a twelve miles' march, and saw them falling out of the ranks, some lying like logs on the pavement, paralysed with fatigue, only to be roused by brutal kicks. Such troops are not to be relied on for the work before them.

Up to the present time there is no wavering in the determination to attack Plevna once more and try to carry it by main force. The army is engaged in works of circumvallation, digging and trenching, and raising small redoubts all round, but sapping goes on very slowly under the direction of the Engineer corps, which has been conspicuous only for its inactivity during the campaign. It is very strange that a branch of service so strikingly useful in the Crimean war should have been so little employed in this.

The indignation of the Army of Plevna against all the authorities is becoming very dangerous. Besides General Levitsky, who is the principal scapegoat, General Kriloff, commanding the Fourth Corps, is angrily accused of letting Chevket Pasha's convoy pass. The story is current that this general was for three years commander of the cavalry brigade at Warsaw, and that in all that time he never owned a horse, but borrowed one when required. It is not the generals alone who are attacked, however. The soldiers grumble that they are not properly led by the regimental officers. In short a dangerous spirit prevails at a moment when the men who have recovered from their wounds are being sent back to their regiments for a fourth attack upon positions which they regard with superstitious hatred. I hear that under these circumstances officers of every rank are neglecting their duty, and in too many cases are giving themselves up to drink, as Tchernayeff's army did when things grew desperate.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RUSSIAN OFFICER.

THE Emperor has just ordained that all ranks in his army shall be open to merit, that the private who distinguishes himself in future shall enjoy rewards more substantial than a tin cross and the small yearly sum attending it. He is henceforth eligible for a commission. There are two classes of officers in the Russian army—one distinguished by the knowledge of some foreign tongue, the other conversant solely with its own; to these, it would appear, a third class will be added, comprising individuals who cannot read or write. So it must necessarily be if soldiers are to be promoted, seeing that ninety per cent. cannot sign their names. An imperial ukase of the sort is no dead letter. Privates will certainly be raised to honour when their comrades' voice proclaims them worthy. Russian companies are used to give their votes in such a

matter, for they have the distribution of the crosses allotted to each regiment in proportion to its share in a victory. They are likely to insist on the fulfilment of the Emperor's promise. But experience tells us that supreme bravery, of the cut and thrust description, is not a common attribute of educated men. The mere animal who does not think does not fear, and his brute courage is more likely to collect suffrages than the valour of the reflecting creature who is quite as brave, but who, seeing two ways of gaining an end, prefers the safe one.

The first class of Russian officers consists of nobles, the second of men noble by profession, and the third will be formed of illiterate peasants. In other words, the upper ranks are filled from the territorial gentry, while beneath them stand regimental officers noble by reason of their parents' services; under these again will now come the officers promoted from the ranks. It will be no heavy grievance for the second to admit the third. A democratic spirit is bred and nurtured by despotism, whether it be that of Czar or Sultan. The Russian soldier is docile, patient, and obstinate. He will learn to read and write as quickly as any, and little more is asked of the regimental officer. He will appropriate the ideas of his new

order, which, after all, are not much different from those he has been used to. "Nihilism," acquired or instinctive, is apparently correlative to Slavonic civilisation, and the new-comer will find no more than an expansion of his own vague notions among the philosophers he has joined. Those social rules and observances which mark a caste in Western Europe cause no difficulty in Russia. Should the *moujik*, by some fate incredible, be elevated to field rank, he would greatly shock his colleagues; but so would a majority of subalterns and captains under the present system. Between the field officer and the regimental there is a great gulf fixed; not so between the regimental officer and the private.

To dismiss the lower rank of officers briefly, it may be said that they know their duty, and they do it, not intelligently, not ardently, but with patience and conscience. Those qualities which we desire, which all Europe desires to instil, or rather to find, in non-commissioned officers, are possessed by them. The Russian army is not yet so educated as to venture upon leaving to sergeants and corporals the duty which elsewhere devolves upon them. Such things still dwell in the future, which contains many a surprise for those who study Muscovite affairs.

Regimental officers display all the careless kindness which is characteristic of their race. Nowhere, not even in the English service, are the relations more agreeable between officer and man—up to a certain point. There is never freedom in their intercourse; the social limits are not distinct enough for that, and the Emperor's late order may perhaps dissolve what once existed. But officers are extremely kind, troubling themselves over a man's trouble, and exerting themselves, as far as is safe or pleasant, to protect their company from the innumerable vultures that hang round it. Nothing in the Russian army so much impressed Roumanians and foreign officers who remember the Crimean war, as the disuse of the stick, and the gentle manner employed in addressing the men. An aide-de-camp of the Austrian Emperor loudly declared in his astonishment that no soldiers in the world have such petting and "spoiling." Exaggeration aside, it is quite true that Russian officers are fairly attentive to the comfort of their men, and display towards them on the march and in camp a good-natured regard which is agreeable to see. But, as we have written, regimental officer and private have the same blood, the same ideas; and as the amiability of the latter must not be strained too far,

so the gentleness of the former goes but a certain way. I have witnessed acts of very great brutality, performed in broad daylight, before many eyes. When the officer gets enraged, the discarded stick reappears fast enough, and is applied with merciless obstinacy, as it is borne with silent stubbornness. In the long middle street of Tirnova, upon a Sunday afternoon, I once beheld an incredible scene. A captain on horseback, surrounded by a crowd of officers and soldiers, with his whole force was lashing a poor wretch who stood before him. I could not ascertain his offence. Muttering a few words from time to time, he stood there, his hand fixed at the salute, though blood trickled down the fingers. The officer was white with rage; his pony, with that sympathetic fear which horses show in moments of excitement, backed and circled, snorting. But the savage Cossack whip gyrated all the time, descending with an angry thud upon the victim's shoulders. No bystander spoke. The men seemed to watch with stolid curiosity, not unmixed with amusement. The officers' lips curled in disgust; but nobody interfered. This painful spectacle lasted fully five minutes after I arrived; but in the end obstinate endurance prevailed over reckless passion. The

executioner threw down his broken whip, and hoarsely gave the man in charge of two fellow-soldiers looking on. The astonishment of the Bulgarians at this development of mild Christianity was amusing to see.

I do not mean to give the idea that such scenes are commonly beheld, and I think it most probable that the man deserved punishment. All I would prove is, that Captain Bolla's enthusiastic report upon the abolition of the "stick" is not wholly accurate. I have chosen the incident which most impressed me; but others I might describe. It appears, therefore, that in practice, whatever be the theory, an officer's kindness and gentleness towards his men lasts just as long as his temper holds out. This, indeed, is what one would have expected from study of the Russian character. Nowhere in armies that make less parade of amicable relations between class and class—not in the German, where a blow is common enough, nor in the English at its worst period—could such a sight have been possible as that I have described. Could we imagine a captain who so far forgot himself as to flog one of his soldiers in the open street, it would still remain for us to credit that superior officers could stand

and watch the proceeding distastefully yet never interfere. The story is all Russian.

We have been talking hitherto of the regimental officer of the line, and if I have succeeded in drawing him to pattern, the reader sees a shabby, ignorant, amiable, conscientious fellow, who does his duty well, but entertains no lofty view of his vocation. Something remains to be said of his political ideas. The Russian officer who troubles himself about such things is a Nihilist, and even that majority which unconsciously practises the philosophy of Gallio has Nihilism in its very blood. One hears a great deal about that system, but its essential doctrines are thought to be a mystery. I can throw little light upon them, but I have satisfied myself that the professors are no wiser than I. Nihilism, again, is a product thoroughly Russian. Its fundamental idea is to pull down all human institutions, and to set up Nothing in their place. The despotism of Czars is not more offensive to it in the abstract than the free government of parliaments, the dogmas of the Oriental Church than the religion of humanity, monastic rules than the order of holy matrimony. Whatever is systematic in human affairs must come down, and Nothing is to rule a prostrate universe.

The philosophy is monstrous, absurd, unable to withstand five minutes' discussion; and, as a fact, it is not discussed. Men take it or leave it. Somewhere, I think, dwells a vague impression that the heads of the sect go a step further—that they have theories of building as of destroying. Nihilism, however, is a subject too large and too interesting for mere reference. Suffice it to say that unintelligible despotism not unnaturally leads to the negation of authority; that the perpetual intrusion of somebody in the affairs of people constitutionally thoughtless, absolutely ignorant of human experience under different conditions, slow of mind, obstinate of prejudice, and above all things impatient of the ills they know, almost necessarily drives them into a despairing worship of chaos. What concerns us at this moment is the practical result of Nihilism upon officers of the Russian army. Here again we come face to face with a contradiction. A large number of them earnestly hope that they may be beaten. Patriotic as they are, even a Turkish conqueror would be welcome, if only his victory upset the order of things at home. They utterly despair of establishing their theories unless by a "smash," and they cannot hope for a "smash" except from reverses in the field. In any army but

the Russian this would signify that the officers were disaffected, unreliable. It is not so at all. Though a man hope to be beaten, though he long for disaster with that Asiatic indifference to human life and suffering which lies deep in the Russian, he will do his own duty to the uttermost—will fight to the last with his whole power and intelligence. These are contradictions, but they must be recognised and weighed by those who would understand the subject.

The colonel or general, officer of cavalry, or even subaltern of the Guards, is another being. He appertains to the *noblesse* established and recognised; he is familiar in Paris, known in London, and wherever he goes is liked. Taught three or four languages in childhood, he learns three or four graces, and upon them all preserves that gallant, heedless, sympathetic *bonhomie* which is so emphatically characteristic of the Russian gentleman. Putting our fellow-Englishman aside, for whom one may feel a natural partiality, there is no associate so pleasant. He appears to represent in this nineteenth century the *homme de qualité* upon whose fine manner our ancestors grew enthusiastic in the middle of the last century. Perhaps his kindliness is not wholly real, but it is certainly very pleasant. Perhaps he does

not know much, but how charmingly he learns, and how delightfully, with what good taste, he displays the information which has just been clumsily furnished to him! The Russian *gentilhomme* has little, at first sight, of the national qualities. His handsome face is distinctly English—owing, doubtless, to the mixture of German blood; his politeness, frank, straightforward, laughing, is English also; his physical courage and hardihood are just what we admire. All that we recognise about him as foreign—be that mentioned to our shame—is a tendency to seek the ladies wherever they reveal but a glimpse of their existence. And he loves everything English—except her resolute obstruction of the Fates that lead Holy Russia. It is common to hear a wealthy officer protesting with needless heat that such and such parts of his equipment are "real English." Two seigneurs of the staff avowed to me that nothing but real English articles could be found in their house, even to grooms and dogs. With this general liking for our people it falls hard upon the Russian that he should be less known, less understood, less appreciated by Englishmen than by any. He complains with droll warmth that we have an idea more true, information more general and exact, of any savage

race in the South Sea than of the Muscovite. It is certainly a fact that our notions about him were very wild before this struggle revealed something of his nature.

That semi-barbarous profusion which used to make the Russian magnate a byword in Europe is quite abandoned in the army. The delight in fine clothes, fine arms, fine horses, is natural, and not unbecoming in a soldier. In such matters those who can afford it are still prodigal. But no prince or Boyard throws his gold away, and Bucharest contemptuously murmurs that a young Grand Duke will count his change. If the nobles are poorer than in 1854, they have also learned better sense and better taste since then. The moral qualities of a class so kindly and amiable towards the stranger, so laughter-loving, and so volatile with an acquaintance, are not easily estimated. I do not myself believe that Russians are insincere; I am sure they are good-hearted. But the constitutional lightness of their character lays them open sometimes to a reasonable suspicion. Michelet wrote amazing nonsense in his 'Légende du Nord,' but he caught shrewd glimpses of truth here as everywhere. Describing the Russian character, so inconsistent with the Russian policy,

he said that the people are quicksilver, to be held and made weighty by no power except the iron hand of frost — which frost, in Muscovy, is the German element. Spite of its exaggeration, this simile dwells in one's mind. Everywhere in Russia the German rules, and everywhere his employment is to hold the quicksilver together. Thus only it gains weight. And the quicksilver struggles—the German is hated. Such a blind but not unintelligible dislike do the natives show towards him as do Roumanians towards the Jew. He is their schoolmaster, their driver. Were it not for the German element Nihilism would long since have been reigning in the empire—if Nihilism be understood to signify mere chaos. From the remarks made upon the Russian officer, he of German birth must be excluded. There are abundance of such, the majority of whom will rise above their comrades. The imperial family may hate them, the heir apparent may roughly decline to have any about his presence, may even insult them at every opportunity; but if the quicksilver is to be coagulated the German must be called in. The scientific branches of the army fall to him of course. With all his intelligence and quickness the Russian noble cannot rival him,

nor tries very hard. It may be taken for certain that if the Teutonic element could be exhausted, whilst the pure Slav stock survived, no Power in Europe would need to fear Russian arms or Russian ambition. That cannot be, for Teutonic blood flows in almost every noble vein, more or less. One sees it in the finer features and more slender shape of the superior officer. We have said little, be it observed, upon his military qualities. Much can hardly be said applicable to all of his class. He is rashly and desperately brave, as a rule; ignorant of all duty except that of winning a cross. He keeps up pleasant relations of patronage with the inferior officers before described, and knows better than to meddle with their arrangements. He is hardly known by the soldiers, for whom, however, he has a pleasant word upon occasion. He laughs at revolutionists, greatly marvels at enthusiasm in any cause, ridicules the war, likes the Turk, and hates the Bulgar; he speaks of his countrymen as "*ce bon peuple*," but perhaps in his secret soul he is a Nihilist as warm as any, and hears with mingled feelings of a Turkish victory.

"NIHILISM" AND "PANSLAVISM" IN THE RUSSIAN ARMY.

I have not enjoyed any unusual facilities for learning the secrets of Nihilism. If it possess a literature in foreign tongues, I have not been so lucky as to hap upon it. But various officers of various rank have discussed such matters with me, and I think I know enough upon this subject to be assured that little is to be known.

There are deeper metaphysicians, doubtless, than those who wear epaulette and sword, but we are to deal not with the true and the beautiful of the Nihilist creed, but with the idea of those abstractions cherished by the average of votaries. This thing is important to note, whether the philosophy be or be not so. Freemasonry is a dread secret which but a very few of millions initiated really grasp—so the Jesuits tell us; but if we could believe it an active power of revolution, we should like to know at least how the destined revolutionists understand it. If Nihilism boast an acknowledged prophet, a logical aim and completion, a great number of its disciples are ignorant of them. I report the system under the shape in which it is actually affecting

large classes in Russia. The religion of its high priests may be something quite different, but if so their teaching is misunderstood.

Nihilism may be called a finished phase of Communism. In the only land where the commune still survives—which is, naturally enough, the only European land where a despot rules—that system cannot be accepted as a panacea. The Russian who knows what manner of government is that of the "Mir" does not think of extending it to imperial concerns. Occidentals dissatisfied with all authority that human beings have invented, turn back to the middle ages, and see their ideal in the government of the commune—which is somewhat of a mystery to all but the learned, and perhaps to them. Russians, not to be entrapped by this snare, go beyond the middle ages, and seek man's primeval constitution—so they arrive at "Nihilism." With the haste of inexperienced persons, half-educated, they condemn in one breath all philosophies and systems, religions and governments. Trying them by an easy logic, they conclude that none are perfect, and so dismiss them all.

I remember talking one moonlight night with an officer of rank—it was at Gabrova, on the eve of the

first battle—who would not even allow our English constitution to be better than his Emperor's ukase. "Both are quite stupid and unreasonable," he said; "I would not change our government for yours." He ardently longed that defeats in the war, whereof there was small hope at that time, might compel the Czar to give a constitution; but that was not to be the end, only a means to the ultimate triumph of "nothingism"—that is, of humanity pure and simple, wherein every being will do what is right in his own eyes, and whatever he does will be "good." The officer of whom I speak was a cultivated man, who did not sneer at English politics and English life without knowing somewhat of them. To my remark that our system upon the whole had been the most successful of all yet tried in securing national happiness, he answered cordially, "It is a marvel; it has been worked and improved by the most extraordinary succession of great minds that the world has ever seen. But we are entering the lists now, and we have a new revelation."

The one word of that revelation is Danton's motto —*Destrue!*—uproot, throw down, roll over all that exists. Nowhere but in Russia, where wealth and birth are rare—generally "insolent," in M. Dumas'

phrase—nowhere else could such ideas have a chance of acceptance. Communists in France are but an infinitesimal proportion of the educated classes; but in Russia Nihilists, or their sympathisers, form a majority there. All object to the despotism of one; the mass object to the authority of any. The people of Russia are superstitious beyond all others, but they do not honour or observe religion, much less its ministers. That a man should cross himself or attend mass is no evidence of his orthodoxy, or proof that he would defend the Church, even by wishes, were it attacked. Of late years, so I was frankly told, it has been pronounced "bad style" to profess infidelity, at least in the circles of the Court. I never heard the most reckless of young aristocrats say one word in defiance of religion, though the tone of his conversation might be enough to show that he held it in no respect.

Faith, such as it is, is threatened by Nihilism, so is the family, so is property, and with these, of course, science and art and literature. Even in '92 the congress of maniacs in Paris adored something; their frenzy has reached Russia in this year of grace, more virulent and less fanciful. The Great Revolution was heralded by strange philosophies, by ideas

of a blissful state to be attained by man, were he relieved of certain disabilities. Whether or no there be revolution of the same sort brewing for Russia, it is worth a note that Nihilism is the best Utopia which her discontented image for themselves as the result of their efforts for freedom. Is this no more than the difference between Gaul and Muscovite, or has despotism more deeply "rotted into the soul of those whom we survey"? I have tried to discover—and I have had the means of inquiring—what is to be set up when all has been cast down—imperialism, bureaucracy, armed force, religion, marriage, property, and all the rest. But no answer was given me. Let us have a clear page, the Nihilists seem to say, and remark what beautiful things will show themselves upon it.

When one has overcome the first impulse to laugh at these vain and shallow imaginings, there is a certain pathos in the philosophy. To what degrading depths has authority been carried, when intelligent creatures cry in despair, "Away with it all, and let us count the cost thereafter." That mere inability to raise even a phantom substitute for the power overthrown reveals its deadly pressure. There may be ills to be rid of which men will imperil

all the time to come as well as the fruits of the past. If the reader understands what manner of being is the Russian, he knows him for a kindly, unimaginative creature, matter of fact, submissive, slow to take offence. Persons of station, civil or military, differ from the crowd in externals, but they may well have these national characteristics at heart. The iron must have entered deeply, therefore, when officers of rank and birth are Nihilists, or, disclaiming the tenets of the sect, show in their talk an unconscious leaning towards its wildest vagaries. That they do so I can guarantee. Amongst mistaken notions prevalent about the Russian officer is that which makes him cautious, timid, a reticent being. Most emphatically he is not so. Officers in every rank have talked to me flat treason and mutiny, nor lowered their voice in so doing. Yet I know, by common report, that one pleasant fellow suddenly left camp, and it was said out loud that he had been banished to Siberia for offences unknown. Explain the anomaly how we may—by the recklessness of habit, by national character, by indignation begot of imperial mistakes—the fact remains that Nihilist views are not concealed, at least to a foreigner.

It will be asked, What practical effect have they? Very little at present, of an active sort. One is constantly startled by the admission of an officer that he hopes to see his country unsuccessful in this war—"pounded like clay" a Cossack colonel once expressed it to me. But the instinct of discipline, perhaps of loyalty, is as yet too strong for disaffection. How long it will retain this controlling force, or what provocation will be too much for it, I am in no position to forecast. Unless the angry spirit nursing in the regiments before Plevna have broken into violence, the most discontented of officers will not take any step towards realising his own wishes. But the state of feeling in the army is now quite unknown to us, since foreign correspondents (such as are allowed to stay) have been ordered to the rear. A paragraph in the official Russian gazette may have struck the reader when it was reprinted here some days ago. It stated that three men only had been shot by order of a court-martial since the war began. I have every reason to believe that the sense of words has been marvellously twisted to bring this statement within the bounds of truth, but taking it for what it may be worth, one must ask why the information should be volunteered just now. Is it an example or a warning?

If there be any such disaffection at Plevna as is believed, the way to mutiny will be half cleared by Nihilism among the officers. But one must regard that prospect with alarm. A rising of the Russian people would be a desperate temptation of the Furies, though it were organised by the shrewdest and controlled by the most resolute, for an end clearly perceived, to be reached by ways shaped out. But all this is just the reverse of Nihilism in the army, which has no idea or object beyond the overthrow of all things. Its votaries look with reasonable trust to obtain a Constitution as the result of this war, if nothing better turn up; and the Constitution, they think, will be a letting loose of waters. Time and the unseen forces labour with them at a ceaseless sap. At any hour or any day the assault may begin, without warning or signal; and from that moment, should the attack succeed, Russia may be ruled out of European politics, making her exit as suddenly as she made her entrance, until, if that be possible, another Peter the Great rise in her midst and recollect the disjointed fragments of what was once an empire. The Czar is the State; Nihilism is the Czar's antithesis; if it gain the upper hand the Russian State falls to nothing.

Few officers, I think, are Panslavists. The less

educated class do not know enough to feel such a question, and the upper ranks know too much. There are exceptions, of course. The favourite councillor of the Czarewitch is Panslavic to enthusiasm, though, or perhaps because, his thoughtful genius marks him for a great career. General Novitsky also, late chief of staff of the Fourth Corps, entertains views of extreme warmth upon this question. I mention his name without scruple, having asked, and laughingly received, permission to do so, when that pleasant officer startled me with his advanced opinions.

It was in the four-gun battery overlooking Plevna, not upon the great day of battle when fog and rain walled us about, but on the sunny afternoon succeeding. For an hour we had watched the black and evil-looking mound, half-robed in smoke, where Skobeleff was gallantly resisting a most gallant foe. He had just taken advantage of a moment's pause to send a line in pencil begging reinforcements. What could be done was ordered, and then General Novitsky expounded to me his views. I had asked how the battle was going, and he, taking my arm, replied, with emotion, "To-day's battle, or yesterday's, or to-morrow's, may be unsuccessful—it

matters nothing. The great fight must be ours, for ours is the world." Rather astonished, I said, "Enemies accuse England of that boast, General." "I do not mean the English world," he answered eagerly. "We have no quarrel with you, and we will be your best friends if you will let us. When I speak of the world I understand Europe." Even with this limitation the General's opinions staggered me. He professed no philandering regard for Serbs or Bulgars. No Magyar or Turk could speak of them with more blistering scorn. They are nothing to the Russian Panslavist, but most wretched food for powder—dirty levers with which to move the universe. If they were not established by Providence for that very purpose, what could have been its object in setting them where they are? This was urged so strongly as to give me the idea that it had produced great effect on some occasion. I thought of Leech's horsedealer, who concluded that his screw *must* be a hunter, since it would neither hack nor pull, and "it couldn't a' been made for nothing." But what a blow for M. Ristics, of Belgrade, and his master, had they heard themselves thus lightly dismissed!

Panslavism in the army is of this complexion: it

counts bayonets, their weight moral and physical; after adding up and balancing, it says, We can crush the world. "I have lived a great deal on the Continent," observed General Novitsky, "and I have studied both the French and German character. I passed but a week in London, where I knew nobody, and was very dull, because I could not understand all that I admired so much. It is my longing to come and stay in England till I become like an Englishman"—hundreds of officers have said the same kind of thing to me. "But as for the French, do you think they could stand against our men for an hour?" In answer to my look of surprise the General exclaimed, laughingly, that he had not the least quarrel with France; quite otherwise, in fact. It was of moral qualities he spoke—patience, endurance, resolution, honesty, devotion. How these were to be matched against the rival qualities of France, without a war, seemed again to be one of those concerns of which Providence has visibly charged itself, like the establishment of Serbs and Czeks in the awkward positions they occupy.

I observed that virtues such as were claimed with more or less of justice for the Muscovite—I could have demurred to the pretension of honesty—do not

make up all those merits upon which a people may assume to be the foremost of humanity. I asked, without offence, for a list of the discoveries and thoughts, the works of art and beauty, the literature and poetry and philosophy which have been contributed by Slavonic intellect to the world's store. General Novitsky gave the answer stereotyped, "We are young yet," he said; "our nation is barely as old as a full-grown elephant. We have been engaged till now with other matters. Wait, and you will see." I might have retorted that Russia is as old as Greece; that her annals are not more chequered than were those of France up to the reign of Henry IV. But these reflections I suppressed, answering only that the world cannot afford to wait for a chance: that if Russia claims to rule Europe by right of intellect and virtue she must make this right evident before her claim will be allowed; and that, if she rely upon force of numbers, she must multiply apace, for there are young nations rising across the sea which will be slow to yield her superiority.

If I have conveyed to the reader an impression that Nihilism and Panslavism are ideas vague and disquieting in the Muscovite army, I have succeeded

as I wished. The one represents revolution at home, the other revolution abroad. I am sure that Russians are unskilful conspirators; were they not so, a system so vehemently hated by many, supported by few, and approved by none, could not have lasted such a time, in spite of all efforts to overthrow it. But they have amongst them a class which adds to the national recklessness a love of intrigue borrowed from other peoples, like a theatrical property. It is no wonder that the Czar has been compelled to arrest the leader of Panslavism, though he himself may well be indifferent to that leader's proceedings. It is no burning question in Russia—no question at all, in fact; but the Austrian house is always smouldering. Panslavism at home, like the demand for a Constitution, is but one means to an end, and that end is Nihilism. No weapon comes amiss to the adherents of that philosophy. With the Panslavic cry, the Orthodox scream, the Chauvin shout, they drove the Emperor to war—to his destruction. But those who so cleverly pulled the strings were not soldiers—not, at least, of the class I know. Russian officers are innocent of political intrigue, and if some of them would welcome defeat, they will do nothing to further it, but the contrary; if they desire the

autocracy of Russia in Europe, calling it Panslavism, they leave the means, with a quaint trust, to Providence. But if by any course of events the disaster which they will not seek arrive, then will be seen how their convictions and their loyalty have been sapped by the revolutionary spirit.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE COSSACK.

The grand machine of war set going by the Russian Emperor tumbles visibly to pieces. Some of its wheels can no longer work, some work ill, and the rest work sullenly, with half a heart. I cannot help again referring to the manner of Russian officers here towards me personally. It is no less than a protest so strong as to come near mutiny. The Grand Duke has telegraphed my dismissal over Europe, but his staff gives me a warm and hearty farewell, while in Bucharest I am loudly thanked by officers of every grade. One high and puissant seigneur of the Imperial Guard asks an introduction to protest that the whole army is obliged to me; another cries aloud, across a restaurant thronged with people, that the Emperor should have deco-

rated me instead of sending me away; a third asks for my photograph. I receive none but kindly words and looks. This is satisfactory to a man accused of treacherous conduct, breach of honour, and of malignity, but it tells ill for discipline. Nor is it only soldiers who disregard the expressed wish of the Commander-in-Chief. I am officially informed that the Roumanian authorities have no idea of carrying out the order so insolently sent them by a foreign prince. M. Cogalniceano has declared to me in person that they will do nothing to shorten my stay, for they also profess gratitude. But at the same time it is conveyed to me officially that I shall have *bien de désagréments* if I continue in the city, *que je passerai de moments désagréables*, in spite of their good-will. So much for Roumanian independence.

It may be true, as has been pointed out, that insubordination has not the same results in a Muscovite army as in others. Be he never so discontented, the soldier does his duty all the same. So it was formerly, but I conceive that too great reliance must not be placed upon this comforting reflection. The army we see is very dull, ignorant, and unthinking; but it is vastly more intelligent

than the army of the Crimea. So say all Roumanians old enough to remember the occupation of 1854. The discontent now prevailing is not that of a regiment or a company against certain officers. It is something quite new—something, indeed, which could not have existed amongst the unreasoning savages of the Crimean war. I quite believe that discipline would hold together a Russian force under circumstances in which even English soldiers would mutiny. But it is a portentous sign when the *moujik* in uniform refuses to fight; still more so when he charges his officers with cowardice, his princes with incapacity. Many things a correspondent has to overlook if he would stay at autocratic headquarters: I will now liberate my soul.

It is true that whole battalions threw themselves down in the valley below Radisovo hill, and would not move to run the gauntlet of that awful fire. They did not turn, nor shoot their officers, as has been beheld elsewhere. They lay and sullenly returned the fusilade with their unequal weapons. They say that their officers would not lead them. The truth or falsity of this charge is to be judged only by persons who were in the hottest of the action,

by the men, in fact, who launch it. To argue on the matter would be absurd, but I cannot readily believe such an accusation. Troops which refuse to advance will defend themselves at any cost when, after the battle is done, those whom they should have supported reproach them with their fault. No better excuse is readily found than accusation of the officers who should have led them on. For my own part, I discredit it.

The responsibility of the headquarter staff for the miserable state of things we see is not to be evaded. But there are many subordinate causes of the disaster. Among these is numbered the failure of the Cossack. His legend is dissipated, and he himself must soon vanish. Months ago I described the war as a Cossack war. Cossacks were everywhere, doing everything. They swept the country like locusts, they raised batteries at Turnu-Magurelli, and defended intrenchments. Seeing their activity, and accepting for granted the legendary prowess of the Don Cossack, foreign officers declared the Uhlan to be outrivalled, and all other light cavalry to stand beneath comparison with that of Russia. I remember riding with Captain Bolla, aide-de-camp to the Austrian Emperor, who warmly protested against

the extravagance of keeping up hussar regiments and "regular" lancers, when the inimitable Cossack, supported by a few dragoons, would do all that they could, and more. The general our companion did not say much in answer. He acquiesced in principle, but did not "jump" at the idea. His chest glittered with decorations, and in actual warfare he had doubtless learned a dreadful secret, whispered through the Asian army for some years past, discredited as a monstrous fable, hushed up, fanatically denied, kept from public knowledge so closely that even a watchful *attaché* had not heard of it. Instead of doing away with regular cavalry those acquainted with the secret, which is now common report, would do away with Cossacks—that is, those of the Don.

For there are two orders of Cossack, the one Russian and the other Circassian—if, indeed, the warrior of the Don and the Oural can be properly called a Russian. When one speaks roughly of a "Cossack," the latter is intended. He immensely outnumbers the Circassian, who is treated rather as a *luxe.* What few observations I have occasion to make about this people may be set down first. They have several sub-divisions, as the Kubanski, the Terek, &c., distinguished, in a military sense, by the colour

of their long coats, or of the silk caftan worn underneath. No dress, saving that of our own Highland regiments, is so stately and martial as the Tcherkess. It is actually alike in the Russian and the Turkish army, and disastrous mistakes have arisen in the field. Few words are needed to describe a costume which many pictures have made familiar. The long black coat, with its double row of cartridge-cases on the breast, the fur cap of height just proportionate, surrounding a stiff red fez, crossed with a saltire of silver lace, the silver trappings, dagger, pistol, disposed so gracefully at flank and waist, the guardless sabre with a hilt of *niello* enamel—all these details are known and universally admired. But to see them in their due perfection we should behold the dress upon those to whom it belongs of right—upon a Tcherkess prince, for example, of the Emperor's bodyguard. His lofty figure and perfect face, his Oriental stateliness and courtesy, would almost create dignity in a shooting-coat and "billy-cock";—in his own manly costume he seems a very type of all that humanity may be.

Not every Circassian Cossack is handsome, however, nor are all of great stature. This will be understood when their ancestry is explained. They

are descended from military colonists and offenders, political or other, who were banished to the Caucasus in days when its wild inhabitants continually harried the Russian border. They established themselves on the Kuban river mostly, a large stream north of the mountains, which pours into the Black Sea at Tamar. The Government naturally fostered this outlying defence, encouraged adventurous spirits to emigrate thither, and overlooked irregularities. But it could not adequately supply the lack of a female population, and the Christian youth easily fell into their neighbours' habit of seizing a wife by force of arms. Thus it happened, as everywhere else—in the Irish pale, for instance—that the second generation of colonists was Circassian in language and feeling, the third in customs, the fourth in appearance, and all things else saving religion, not seldom in that also. But among every such mixed race occur curious "survivals," in Darwinian phrase. Some of the lowest Russian types I have ever seen will be found amongst these Tcherkess Cossacks.

But the greater part fulfil our most lofty expectations. Their general character seems to be that of the "chivalrous savage," if such there be. Their bravery is unquestioned, and they are faithful to

death with the officer who takes their fickle fancy. They are active, enduring, and adroit at all stratagems of war. Upon the other hand, they are suspicious and lack cohesion, have no feeling of duty to the flag, but only towards their officer, show not the faintest glimmering of a moral sense beyond the "chivalry" mentioned, and have lusts and passions uncontrollable. Allowing for the warmth of southern blood, one sees in them precisely those qualities and faults which marked the Highlander in '45. But the allowance demanded is one so grave in a war like this that the Circassian Cossacks have been kept back as a rule, as much for that reason as for fear of disaffection.

This is a serious matter, none the less, and one that grows in importance. Many are Mussulmans, and before the war began in earnest it was found necessary to send back six squadrons. That cry on Allah the Victorious and Merciful which heralds the Turkish charge cannot be heard without a thrill by any son of Islam, nor by any man whom deeds of valour can arouse. I remember to have written how fiercely the Circassian escort scowled under their black hoods as they sat behind General Zortoff, watching the great fight at Plevna. Many of their

kin were calling for help upon the Deity they themselves adored, and for the Moslem it was a desperate trial.

Probably the Emperor's escort is picked of zealous Christians. Its members have scarlet lances and belong to the branch of Tcherkess who wear a scarlet undershirt. Others, according to their tribe, wear yellow or blue. I met, indeed, upon occasions, with a stray Tcherkess whose outer coat was yellow or blue, or silver-grey, instead of black, but squadrons of such sort are few. The cartridge-cases on the breast are adorned with colour or lace to distinguish the regiment.

One constantly sees a private whose sword is a marvel of fine taste and delicate *niello*. All connoisseurs know that Russian metal-workers have carried off the prize at every exhibition in this class; but I, at least, was much surprised to learn that the art is wholly in Circassian hands. The cheapness of their work is almost more astonishing than the beauty, whilst the facility of it surpasses all. A common soldier of the Kubanski Cossacks, for £3 5*s*., offered to make me the fac-simile of a sword-hilt which had drawn my notice by its exceeding taste amongst a score of others, all beautiful. He had no tools but

those of the regimental farrier, and no anvil but that upon which horseshoes are beaten; of course, it would be my duty to furnish so much silver as I thought necessary. In general, the graceful weapons of the Tcherkess are heirlooms so priceless that an offer is thought insulting.

Our idea of the Don Cossack is quite inexact. Whatever he may have been in former times, that famous irregular is now the wealthiest and most civilised of Russian peasants. The school in his village is the only one attended seriously throughout the empire, and he often takes care that his children learn something. There is much less drinking in his community. The land which he holds for military service is profitably tilled, and he saves money. But this education and comparative refinement have destroyed the old instincts to a great degree. The Cossack is an independent and adventurous fellow, but he no longer loves war for fighting's sake, or hates a foe at bidding. Hostilities are declared and he goes out, not unwillingly, on his own horse, with his own saddle and sword. When the service to be performed is the scouring of an enemy's country—or, for that matter, of a friend's—he will do it with intelligence and con-

science. Though not desperately brave, he will face a certain risk for duty, especially if there be a chance of plunder behind. But when it comes to a fight he remembers that the horse beneath him is his own. The peasant of every country is alike in sacrificing all for "property." It is not needful to suppose the Don Cossack a coward because he flinches at the trying moment. So did the French peasantry when their cottages were endangered. The Don irregular, as I have pointed out, is now educated beyond the point at which his forefathers stood, at which his fellows of Terek and Kuban still remain. He does not love war or hate the enemy. And so all his thoughts concentrate upon the risk to "property," and he shrinks. He will not push a reconnaissance home, nor engage the foe in face if he can help it.

Another essential part of the system tends to lessen his fighting value. It is barely just that a man who risks his own horse and equipments in battle should have a right to take those of the enemy. This is recognised, and the Cossack may seize anything of that sort which falls in his way. Hence his thoughts are constantly fixed upon loot, even when fighting; hence a perpetual

temptation to crime, which few soldiers, I think, would resist as do these generally—serious crime is meant, of course, for petty marauding is indulged by all, and grave offences are too common. It is not considered wrong to take small objects or live stock from a friend, an ally—even a fellow-soldier or an officer of foot. Cossacks spend great part of their time in collecting plunder, and great part in selling it. Nearly every one has gold pieces about him; some have transmitted, through a trusted officer, amounts really considerable. In one case mentioned to me a bag of Russian imperials and Turkish liras, one hundred and sixty gold pieces in all, was sent by a private soldier to his friends.

Officers talk much, and protest that such things ought not to be. But "*Nischevo!*"—it is nobody's business, and they good-naturedly give the man a cheque, and direct the envelope for him. I take it as certain that the trooper who carries £150 in gold at the saddle-bow of his own horse will not put himself in the way of getting killed if he can help it. If to this natural feeling be added the good-humoured recklessness characteristic of all Russians, it will be evident without demonstration that the duties of scouting, patrolling, and night work

generally are in danger of neglect. And, in fact, it is so. A man cannot hope to find plunder in darkness, but he is sure to find discomfort and cold. The Cossack patrols are a bad joke. It is a fact which almost every active correspondent can attest by experience, that an enemy must have remarkably bad luck did he get a challenge before reaching the line of sentries round a camp. There he would find vigilance enough, but the chances are ten to one that he never saw a Cossack.

The system is unsuited for modern times, or for a population escaped from savagery. This is now admitted on all hands; but how is it to be broken up? All the strength of Russia would be called upon to suppress a rising of the Don Cossacks if the withdrawal of their ancient privileges should stir them to revolt. And assuredly it would strain their loyalty to the utmost. If their privileges be destroyed they must submit to tax and conscription as do other subjects of the Czar, and how will they take that? Disarmament must necessarily precede or accompany any measures of the sort, for it would be madness to leave such a great population its weapons when about to try dangerous experiments upon it. Something must be done, however—that is agreed.

The Don Cossacks have broken down in the field, not from cowardice, but upon system as it were. A general said to me in English, "They are what your soldiers call 'soft.'" Their passion for loot will carry them as far as the danger, but at touch of it they shrink. It might be said for them, were they engaged with a European force of cavalry, that their equipment is wholly unsuitable. But in this war the adversary is as awkward as themselves, and, in spite of that advantage, the famous Don Cossack has shown himself so unequal to his ancient fame that in principle he is doomed.

He shaves his neck, so that the coarse hair falls in equal length from the crown of his head; this matted shock he drags out as straight as it will stand, cocks his hideous shako aside upon it, and surveys the world with a leer that would be offensive were it less amusing. The Cossack is decidedly the handsomest as the finest race of Russia. It is not at all uncommon to observe in the ranks a face and figure of the purest classic beauty. In height the men cannot average less than 5 ft. 8 in., their breadth is more than proportionate, and they are always upright, supple, and muscular.

They ride, as do the Tcherkess, with short stirrups

and inturned toes; that attitude, ugly but safe, which can be sustained only by those "born in the saddle." There is a general belief that the Cossack pony does not suffer from sore back, but this is quite an error. He will endure what no other horses will in scant rations and hard fare, but he is as liable as any to the great curse of equine flesh. The saddle used is high, back and front, but across the middle is strapped a cushion upon which the rider sits, held tight by pommel and cantle, as in the fork of a tree. So high is he perched sometimes that his feet do not reach the pony's belly; thus awkwardly leaning almost to the little creature's ears, he gallops miles unending. The clumsy lance banging at his elbow is useful for vaulting quickly into his awkward saddle, for driving cattle, sounding streams, and such pacific purposes. Besides this weapon he has a guardless sword, a carbine, and is to have a revolver. His pony is hung with miscellaneous objects all round, like a curiosity shop.

The intelligence of the Cossack is unquestionable; he strangely contrasts with other soldiers of the Russian army in this respect. Always at hand, and always handy, he picks up a considerable revenue of small silver if his stars have led him to a favourable

place for making himself useful. Whilst another man would stand and watch a stranger in small difficulties, not with unkindly interest, but without thought of helping him, the Cossack springs forward and does what is necessary. He expects to be paid, however, and, be it ever so much you give him, he will not say a word of thanks. One is always conscious that the Cossack views one with good-natured scorn. That leer I have referred to is ever there. Goodness knows what right divine has given any ragged rascal from the Don the faculty of contemning generals and grand dukes, not to name correspondents—but that right he surely enjoys. His scorn for other mortals is unconcealed, but it is rather kindly. He must allow himself a jeer at the thought of persons arrogating authority over a free-born Cossack; but having given himself that pleasure, he retains no malice at all. Above everything he is independent; so much so that drill has no solidifying effect upon the *sotnia*. He is cheerful, but not noisy; outspoken, knowing no fear of authority; ingenious, high-spirited; conscious of his due — and more. Upon the other hand he is often insolent, unreliable always, an unblushing thief, and selfish to the last degree. The Don Cossack is doomed as an "institu-

tion"; but we have yet to see whether he can be put down.

Another branch of the Russian service has not distinguished itself in this war. Seeing the great fame of Todleben, and the important part played by engineers at Sebastopol, one might have supposed that this corps would receive particular attention. But the engineers of the Russian army have been kept strangely in the background. Sailors made the bridge, artillerymen, infantry, and even Cossacks have been employed upon the batteries. Where the engineers have busied themselves I could never ascertain, unless they are to be credited with the improvement of the Schipka road. They certainly have not mended any other highway, nor kept in repair the excellent bridges which the Turks left us. Those very rude and clumsy streets thrown across rivulets and ditches off the main road are not to be boasted as works of science. When once built, they have been left, unless the Emperor or a Grand Duke happened to pay a visit in that direction. Scarcely one but has a hole in it, and some lie mere dams in the water. To see the roads lined with carcases and fetid bones, the planks started, broken, and ruinous, the mud holes unfilled, the great stones

unremoved, one would pronounce with confidence that, wherever the engineers may have been busy, they have not taken the communications in hand. But if not the roads nor the fortifications, what have they built or designed or improved? General Todleben has been summoned at last, despite the efforts of all his enemies, who are many and powerful. He will find much to shock him, but nothing will seem so grave to the famous general of engineers as the neglect of his own service. I impute no blame to the *corps du génie* of Russia. In warfare of Cossacks, the scientific services may expect to be shelved.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SOLDIERY OF THE ALLIED ARMIES.

THE RUSSIAN SOLDIER.

He is not handsome, nor dashing, nor chivalrous —cares not a doit for glory, and of duty has but a dim perception—remains, indeed, after many years' service, but little better than an ill-clad, ill-set-up peasant, yet the finest soldier of Continental Europe. His rival, perhaps superior, all are agreed to class as an Asiatic; and whilst he so bravely defends the home his forefathers won upon this side the Hellespont, the Turk may laugh at a misdescription. Man to man the enemies are well matched. In the history of war there is no episode of fight so stern and terrible as the long assault upon the Schipka Pass, begun the 21st of August, and not yet finished. It is not scientific, nor even sensible, but it is magnificent. Russians themselves would not have kept up

courage to attack day after day under such awful losses, and none but Russians would have held out as did Radetsky's force, till reinforcements came.

But from the martinet's point of view their discipline is not strict nor their drill perfect. The steady courage and composure that excite our admiration keep them in order almost as good upon the battlefield as on parade, but the order is not very exact, by German or English models. I do not speak of the Guards, of course, but of the line. As would be expected by those who have observed the Russian character, no special pains are taken to produce an upright or soldierly appearance. Whilst men march easily under a crushing weight, obey without thought of questioning, and fight like heroes, officers need not ask of them the precision of machines when going to meet the enemy.

But at the same time Russian latitude goes too far in the matter of straggling. Any man drops out when he thinks proper, and rejoins the company when he pleases. The route is bordered by laggards asleep in the shade, mending their clothes, foraging for unconsidered trifles, or simply gossiping with a comrade. In the worst days of French laxity, the most heedless of Algerian officers would have been

shocked at the straggling invariable on a Russian march. But true it is also that carelessness has less danger here than elsewhere. The Muscovite does not desert nor get into those scrapes which always threaten the Gaul. If he reach camp a few hours late, nothing in particular is lost, for he has not the knack—he will not take the trouble rather—to make himself comfortable under circumstances of any difficulty.

In an empire so vast as the Russian, peopled by so many races, one would expect to see a great variety of types. A private of the Archangelogorodskipouk, from the borders of the Arctic circle, might be supposed to differ exceedingly from a German of the Baltic provinces or a townsman of Odessa. And immense differences there are, doubtless, but not in face or build or fighting quality. The Don Cossack is a type very marked, so, of course, is the Circassian and the Tartar; but the infantry men seem as like as brothers. Nearly all are fair, with broad, short features. The yellow moustache is a late ornament of manhood, and whole companies of stalwart peasants, averaging twenty-five years old, can show but a dozen beards among them.

The Russian soldier is certainly plain, but one rarely sees the class of feature traditionally attributed to him. His eyes are not noticeably small nor "tight," nor wide apart; his nostrils are not spread, nor his mouth prognathous to a remarkable extent. The character of his ugliness is quite European, and in any English regiment one sees a score of faces, in any German regiment hundreds, that exactly reproduce the Russian type. The height of the linesman averages 5 ft. 6 in., rather less, perhaps, than more, but his square shoulders and solid chest would be proportionate with greater stature.

Nothing is given him, in the way of dress, to set off this somewhat ponderous figure. The line uniforms of Russia are the ugliest in Europe—outdone only by the hideous costume of the Cossack. When new, the tunic is bottle-green, with blue, yellow, or red shoulder-straps and facings; but after six months, stay at Kischeneff it had frayed and faded, when seen in Roumania, to a patchwork of dull tones. As long as the weather will allow, a soldier discards his cloth trousers, wearing only the drawers of white cotton, which he crams into rusty knee-boots. Nothing about him is washed, save in moments of extreme

ennui, and his white summer tunic, his drawers, his cap, face, and hands are all mud colour alike. A very dingy, listless fellow is the finest soldier of Europe in a campaign.

But if one look more closely into his pale-blue eyes, and mark the outline of his somewhat shapeless mouth, one sees there, above all things, good-temper and good-nature. He is perfectly ignorant, very stupid, very trusting in people whom he knows, and very suspicious of a stranger. Those who lead him can do anything with the peasant, make him believe what they please, and think as they think, but they cannot make him ferocious. The world may be searched vainly to show men so brave and yet so peaceful, so resolute, and so long-suffering. In six months' campaigning with them, a quarrel will be scarcely seen. They endure any discomfort without complaint, without appearing even to feel it.

They are generous towards a comrade, and good-natured to a stranger, if there be nothing about him to excite their quick distrust. Even when they see ground for suspicion they are apt to behave as Dogberry recommends, and to leave a man severely alone rather than apprehend him. But whilst

giving the Russian soldier credit for gentleness and good-temper, he who watches him may doubt whether listlessness and want of moral activity be not truer causes of his excellent behaviour. Muscovite amiability will not endure much provocation. The man who will show such extraordinary temper where others would turn quarrelsome is roused to pitiless fury at a certain point. Many times have I marvelled to observe how patiently an interruption of the line of march was borne — how officers, teamsters, or soldiers stopped without complaint while a stupid Bulgar drove across the road, or a waggoner halted to light his pipe, to drink at a well, or to steal a bunch of grapes. Other soldiers would not have been so good-natured, but other soldiers would not have pitched obstructing men and carts so brutally aside upon alarm.

So, again, the Russ is generous under certain conditions only. He will distribute anything he does not want, but no one is more pitilessly selfish when his own necessities are pressing. The communistic system in which he has been brought up encourages both of these feelings—liberality with what is superfluous, and greediness of what he really wants. I do not mean that the Russian is conspi-

cuously more selfish than the average run of soldiers, only that his apparent good-nature must not be trusted far. Other people do not deceive by such a show of kindliness.

There is another characteristic belonging to the same class which may be attributed to the teaching of slavery. To pilfer is no crime in the Russian service—no moral crime, that is. Every soldier takes anything that comes in his way. This is a matter of course. Honesty appears to be an unknown virtue with the Muscovite. The Cossack, it is said, will not rob the officers of his *sotnia*, but he has no scruple towards the property of other officers in his regiment, much less towards the property of strangers. The linesman does not seem to draw any distinctions. Whatever he finds anywhere he pockets, with a quaint unconsciousness of wrong-doing. Upon the other hand, he will not generally break open locks nor use force, as a Cossack will upon small provocation. Abundant instances may be quoted to the contrary, no doubt, but there are ruffians in every army, and I speak of the mass. Nevertheless, there are few Bulgarians worth robbing who have not already lost more by their deliverers than the Tcherkess would have plundered from them

in a lifetime. The disorder permitted on a Russian march, as above described, encourages petty marauding.

But it is in the towns that this kind of thing has been most openly and profitably carried on. One unceasing stream of soldiers went from shop to shop at Tirnova demanding money. They would not be denied, insisting with an importunity which itself was a threat. Few householders ventured to refuse or complain.

The Russian soldier is not merry nor wise. His songs are dull, monotonous, and low-toned, contrasting with those of the Cossack. He is, indeed, a sad creature, but willing to be amused. A listless indifference to good or evil fate is his most particular quality, as is good-humoured recklessness of the officer. He does not trouble himself to think, and there, indeed, he shows good sense, for his ideas would be utterly lost. Misfortune of any sort he takes as it comes, accepting it as an excuse for *vodka* and a pipe, if these comforts be obtainable. When a waggon sticks in a mud hole, though the whole train behind be stopped, teamsters first descend for a talk about matters generally, a foray into the vineyards, or a moke.

It must be admitted, however, that when they set to work at length, they go about it with a will, a hardiness, and a quickness of resource quite worthy of Englishmen. So also when they behold a foreigner in distress, from whom *backsheesh* may be reasonably expected, their activity is surprising. It is indifference, not stupidity, nor clumsiness, that makes the Russian soldier unhelpful in camp. Pay him to raise a shelter, to pitch a tent carefully, to mend harness or waggon, and he will do for the stranger what he will not do for himself, with remarkable ingenuity. The money he thus earns will go for *vodka*, if any can be obtained. In the absence of a *Marketender*, he will bargain with some looting Cossack for a pair of women's trousers, Turkish, of course. A silk shirt, to wear with a belt outside, is the Russian's idea of finery; and beautiful shirts he can make out of the trousers, gold embroidered at waist and ankle, which the Cossack has obtained no matter how.

Such a man as we have described is not to be roused or fired into desperate fanaticism. The Russian soldier does not hate the Turk. His officers may and do—those who belong to the small *noblesse* and the *bourgeoisie*—but the soldier "has

not got it in him." Much personal suffering is needed to make the uninformed peasant apprehend that he has a grievance against an individual; and the command to detest a whole population whom he has never seen, who have done him no harm, falls actually unheeded on his phlegmatic mind. Though another statement has been carefully circulated, it is unfounded. If wild and fantastic stories moved him somewhat before entering Bulgaria, the sight of that country and that people have effaced the impression.

He cannot see the filth and savagery of Bulgarian life, being used himself to nothing more refined. He can see and hate, for he daily feels, the bad qualities of those he came to rescue—their brutal selfishness, cowardice, dishonesty, and cruelty; but his good sense forbids him to attribute them to Turkish rule. Upon the other hand, he observes a land excellently cultivated, yards full of wheat and cattle, houses more comfortable than his own, men and women comfortably dressed, roads as good, better bridges, a church in every hamlet, and a priest lording it over the community. Where are the evidences of that oppression so dolefully described to him? Not once, but constantly, did the writer hear it asked, by the lower class of officers and by soldiers, "Why

are we brought hear to die for these villainous people?"

If the Russian soldier feels hatred, it is not for the Turk, but for the officers who would send him a fourth time against that open tomb at Plevna, and for the Bulgarian, who robs and cheats and sometimes murders his deliverer. The men drawn up with grounded arms before the pyramid of heads at Schipka, what time the priest stood by with his service-book in hand, and a fatigue party was packing away the awful things in boxes—even these men could not be stirred to indiscriminating revenge. An officer of Prince Mirsky's staff questioned them cautiously; they only said that Bashi-Bazouks ought to be hung wherever found.

A soldiery like this does not commit "atrocities" unless ordered to do so, or unless maddened with drink; and in the one authenticated case that has come to my own knowledge, it is distinctly stated by victims surviving that the Russians had been plied with *vodka* till they knew not what they did. But there is also a drunkenness of blood, cruel and remorseless as insanity. If the Christian soldier do not cut off heads, nor carve fantastic lines upon an enemy's dead body, he is quite capable of hack-

ing and transfixing it. Those who saw the maddened fury of the troops after the battle of Nicopolis, the senseless rage with which they stabbed at knapsacks, blankets, anything that recalled the foe, would ask no testimony to believe that the wounded were massacred that day. They certainly were. But when the passion of the fight has calmed, and the Russian soldier is himself again, nobody more pleased than he to perform a little service for a prisoner. Such is his nature—peaceful, indolent, good-natured, good-tempered, stubbornly brave; but dense of brain, callous to the sufferings of others, cruelly selfish at a certain point. He is born the instrument of despotism, and, be it nature or long-descended instinct that moves in him, he is marvellously fitted for his place in life.

THE ROUMANIAN SOLDIER.

Amongst the events of this war which should have a permanent result is the discovery that Roumania possesses soldiers who will fight. The Turks knew, or might have suspected it, had they searched their own annals, but to Austria and Russia, yet more

to the world at large, the revelation was quite a surprise. How it should have been so is explained by the national character. People who had studied the history of Eastern Europe were quite aware that the most enduring bulwark of Christianity against Islam had been raised and held in the Carpathians; but students of that history are rare, and the ancient Wallachs and Moldavs are not easily recognised under their recent title. The Slav populations all round had at least one bond of union, in their hatred of the Latin race so curiously set amidst them. In modern times they have calumniated it without scruple, until Wallach became, to Serb and Czek, an equivalent term for coward. The Magyars, in accord for once with their bitter enemies, passed the falsehood on to Austria, and thence it spread through Europe.

In the Servian war of last year hundreds of the peasant soldiery were shot for cowardice, but when the fact oozed out, General Tchernayeff declared his Serbs to be all heroes, and the regiments decimated to have been Wallach. Everybody was satisfied with this explanation. Roumanians themselves did not protest. Listlessly content in Bucharest—that strange oasis amid the barbarous realms that

stretch from Vienna to Pekin—they let the world talk of them as it would. More than that, they had gradually come, during a hundred years of peace, to accept the disgraceful charge. Savage duels, frequent "in society," proved their young boyards to be brave at least; but everybody told them that the peasant would not fight, and, as they knew little about him, they grew to believe it.

The Roumans acquainted with the history of their forefathers are few indeed. Foreigners have compiled the record, not uninteresting or undignified, and foreigners read it. Nine out of ten amongst the wealthy and educated are sufficiently "up" in the annals of France, but they tell the inquirer that they themselves have no national story. French is their language, French their literature, Paris the home for which they long. I visited a few months ago the country house where dwells a rich and influential noble, patriotic, and proud above all things of his Rouman blood; the eldest daughter had not known a word of her native speech till eighteen years old, and a young lady staying there could not literally say more than "yes" and "no" in Rouman. What wonder that such a *noblesse* should misunderstand and depreciate their people?

The peasant has another training. He owns and has constantly before his mind the most poetic ballad poetry of Europe—the most martial also, saving our own incomparable store. The Italian peasant even has not such charming songs of love; the author of 'Chevy Chase' or 'Kinmont Willie' might have gleaned with profit among the Roumanian ballads of fight. Those collected by M. Alexandri breathe fire and sword; stir us like the sound of a trumpet, though translated into that unpoetic tongue which Byron called a "whetstone of the teeth—monotony in wire." These ancient songs are the literature of the people, to which they passionately cling. Gipsies are their bards, called *laütari*, but in the Carpathians, the real home of the race, every peasant prides himself on his skill with the flute and his memory of the old songs.

Thus the recollection of their ancestors' prowess has not faded among the peasantry, and it unconsciously stirs them to "play the man" at need. A curious instance of this is afforded by their employment of the word "Rouman," their proper and original name, dropped out of use long ago as a generic appellation, in favour of the more modern terms "Wallach" and "Moldav," and not yet

restored. Their highest praise of a gallant deed is to say, "It is Rouman!" or, of a man, "What a Rouman he is!" Though the higher classes may have forgotten, to their minds it is perpetually recalled how Turkish pachas from across the Danube, Muscovites from across the Pruth, Poles, Magyars, and Tartars, came upon their country one after another, sometimes all at once; and how, in poetry at least, one after another they were thrown back by Rouman bravery. If there be any truth in the saying that a people's songs direct the national character, the Wallach should be a hero.

But, as has been said, his songs are not all, nor half of them, warlike. Love is a more popular subject, and love of the softest, most indolent sort. His *doinas* and *horas* have for their moral, expressed in charming imagery, "Gather ye roses while ye may," which Charles Kingsley treated in his dance-song of the Egyptian slave-girls, and Theophile Gautier rendered best of all in his Epicurean apostrophe, "Hâte-toi, Cynthie!" They show existence as little worth; they ignore all things but love and pleasure.

Between these two ideas of war and voluptuous enjoyment the Roumanian peasant is brought up.

His softness of character makes him docile; his dislike to give offence often leads him beyond the bounds of self-respect; his incurable levity makes the stranger think him stupid when he is only inattentive. When to these moral weaknesses is added a reckless passion for drink, as is too frequently the case, it is no wonder that careless observers should imagine him a coward and a sot. I can venture to say that Bucharest society has been more surprised than any people at the courage of its soldiers. It was taken for granted that the officers would fight well, but, as a matter of fact, more officers, proportionately, have attracted notice by their failure than have the privates.

The smart look of a soldier depends immensely on his costume, and the Roumanian is most unfortunate in this respect. His cap is a strange construction of black sheepskin, with a turkey feather set in it aside, fastened with an ugly badge. There could not be a head-dress less martial or less becoming. The great coat is always worn, with dirty white trousers outside the clumsy boot. Many regiments of the reserve are still provided—or were of late—with sandals, of appearance most unmilitary. But, after making every allowance for an awkward uniform, it must be

admitted that the Roumanian soldiers do not look "smart" at all. They do not carry themselves well, and they show distress much earlier than the Russians. Very probably their accoutrements are ill-fitted. After two miles' march, the men begin a restless shifting of their packs and rifles, which is ominous to see—hitching them up, pulling at the straps, and walking in constrained attitudes. They perspire, also, with a copiousness quite strange, in sultry weather. Great stories are told of their endurance, nevertheless, and they may be true—for one must not rely too much upon these outward signs. But I think it is well that Roumanians have not been called upon to do such marches as the tough and sturdy Russian thinks not at all remarkable.

They are armed mostly with the Remington, and the bayonet is always fixed. Two men in each company bear a lantern at the end of their rifle instead of a bayonet; the effect is rather droll, but it is a good idea: a light is necessary in lands where roads are marked by nothing but a ditch—not always by that. The build of Roumanians is sufficiently stout, and they reach a greater average height than do the Russian line. But a certain

flaccidity is apparent in their movements. Russians are slow and ponderously indolent, but one never doubts that the strength is there, and the will, to be as quick as any, in case of need. The Roumanian gives no such idea. Half his existence is passed in a day-dream of love and wine; nor does he conceal the semi-somnolent abstraction.

But when is seen strolling by, be it early or late, in sunshine or frost, a pair of wandering *laïtari*, the idle soldier is transformed. By the hour together he will dance in a big ring. And no gentle quadrilles, nor "spins" half round the floor, content him. Several dances he has, of which the two most popular are certainly antique. The *hora* is that circling movement of the Choros, hand-in-hand, so often represented on bas-reliefs. The music fitted to it is soft and plaintive, but when soldiers make the ring they indulge pranks as violent and as grotesque as those of the *can-can*. The other dance, the *calusari*, is adapted for the most extravagant evolutions; *savants* trace it to the antics of the Salian priesthood. Nothing like these exercises is to be seen amongst the Slav or Magyar populations; they are purely Latin, and to find the like of them one must go as far as France.

Such a population as this is not to be transformed into an army of the modern type. No officers, however scientific or conscientious, could drill the mass to precision in movement or thoughtful resource. And the ordinary officer is far from scientific. He also shares the national failings, and to them adds a love of comfort which in its effect can be described as nothing less than reckless. The soldier, used to wretched fare and lodging, supports with patience a little more misery; but the officer is confounded by trifling hardships.

It is to be remembered, again, that the army was never taken *au sérieux*. Before the time of Prince Charles it was indeed no better than a "phantom," with which conspirators and rebels scarcely found it worth while to reckon. The German Hospodar, a cadet of the Hohenzollerns, brother and cousin of warriors, made it his first business to create a real army. By example, by endless pains, and the expenditure of much money from his own purse, he made the service fashionable, and established a force the value of which we see. But officers are not to be made, like soldiers, by some few years' training; especially among such a race. All the instincts of society warred against the Prince's idea, and all the

temptations of Roumanian life opposed him. There is no military caste here, no high conviction of duty, no love of war, nor inclination for study. Bucharest did not better understand its Prince's martial "fad" than its Princess's taste for high-class music. It accepted both as a fashion, sent its sons into the army as it attended musical parties at the palace—yawned at concert and review, and gently ridiculed them both.

Prince Charles has had everything to do, with scarcely any help, and that he has succeeded so well in perfecting one branch of the service is most creditable to him. The Roumanian artillery, in point of excellence, might endure comparison with that of Austria; it stands above the Italian and the Russian. The officers, the younger ones at least, are modest, quiet, studious, and thoughtful. They have had a careful training, both scientific and practical, and they have trained their men. Till the last moment possible, Russians spoke of their ally in terms of bitter ridicule, but from these ill-natured and unfounded strictures they were compelled to except the artillery. His success may encourage the Prince to persevere. If he could officer his line and horse as he has officered his artillery, a Roumanian

contingent would have to be seriously reckoned by any foe that challenged Russia. But this I believe to be impossible; any way, it is a thing of the distant future.

The luxury of the Roumanian camp—of course I speak comparatively—was rather astonishing to one who visited it from the Russian lines. The Czar spends 10,000f. (£400) per day upon his table alone, but the number of persons who are served thereat is little less than two hundred. A fifth part of the sum is monstrously disproportionate for Prince Charles, but he gets vastly more for his expenditure. He does not pay, for instance, for a syphon of soda-water 6f., when it is bought from the *Marketender's* next door at 1f. 25c.;—I fear there are no syphons now, not even at 6f., for the Emperor's own table. But though he employ the cash never so sagely, £80 a day for table money is a charge which neither the Roumanian revenue nor the Prince's fortune can justify. All the rest is on a like scale—the tents, the plate, the lighting, the servants, all foolishly and indeed wickedly extravagant. Roumanian officers have no need of example to spend more than they can afford. The Prince of such thoughtless people

should be doubly studious to show them a pattern of decent economy ;—it would not, perhaps, have been effectual, but it would have given him a right to interfere. Encamped at four hours' distance from their own boundary, with the roads all open behind them, there is nothing to prevent officers obtaining whatever they can get on credit, and they use this freedom to the utmost extent.

It should be remembered, also, in explanation of the impatience which Roumanian officers feel at the campaign, that the immense majority opposed this war. As might be expected, it is not so unpopular now, at least in Bucharest. Nothing succeeds like success. Warriors who sit at home begin to speak with irritation and contempt of the Russians. They accuse them—with some justice—of leaving all the work to the Roumanians, and of not taking their share in even the actual combat. If Plevna should fall, be sure that in Bucharest the credit will be taken for their country's arms.

This spirit has raised to active force the instinct of nationality which has never been forgotten by the peasants, but which had lain dormant among the educated. Since the proof that Roumanians can fight like their ancestors, the realm of their ancestors

is demanded with increasing loudness. There are barely five millions of people under the sway of Prince Charles, but the Roumanian nationality counts eight millions more or less. The Bukovina was wrested from its parent stock in 1755; Bessarabia in 1812. Both these provinces of Austria and Russia are still purely Wallach, having the same language, religion, customs, and, above all, the same traditions as Moldavia. Their oldest and most stirring ballads tell how the hero-kings go out to war from Suciava, where now their ruined palace stands—in Austrian territory. The Carpathians are peopled on their northern, as on their southern, slope by Roumans, though the immigration of a stronger race, the Saxon, is gradually absorbing that nationality in Transylvania.

In their rediscovered pride of arms the people fancy that if the Bukovina and Bessarabia were restored, they could hold their own amongst nations, control the restless Serb, and see that Turkey fulfilled her promises. The dream is natural, and did a less unstable race propound it, Europe might do well to listen. But those who cannot keep their own house are not to be trusted as guardians of another. For years past a small knot of politicians—

not master minds, not influential by wealth or eloquence or character, far less by birth—have been driving the country to its ruin. All know it—peasants, citizens, nobles—and all submit. There is abundance of talent in the land. The most idle of "men about town" will surprise you, for once in a long while, by the breadth of his political understanding, and the clearness with which he can set it out. But the humour passes, and no effort of yours will bring it forth again. What the Roumanian wants is solidity, patience, and earnestness. Before aspiring to enlarge his boundaries, he must throw off the apathetic listlessness that has led him to glory against his will, has delivered his country for a prey to Communist intriguers, and made Roumanian honesty a byword.

THE END.

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[J.&S.]